

Claremont Colleges

## Scholarship @ Claremont

---

CGU Theses & Dissertations

CGU Student Scholarship

---

Spring 2022

### A Theology of Divine Calling in Light of Karl Barth, A.N. Whitehead, and Meister Eckhart's Theological Forms

Kin Ting Caleb Cheung  
*Claremont Graduate University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu\\_etd](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_etd)



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Cheung, Kin Ting Caleb. (2022). *A Theology of Divine Calling in Light of Karl Barth, A.N. Whitehead, and Meister Eckhart's Theological Forms*. CGU Theses & Dissertations, 413.  
[https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu\\_etd/413](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_etd/413).

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the CGU Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in CGU Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

A Theology of Divine Calling in Light of Karl Barth,  
A.N. Whitehead, and Meister Eckhart's Theological Forms

By

Kin Ting Caleb Cheung

Claremont Graduate University

2022



## **Approval of the Dissertation Committee**

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Kin Ting Caleb Cheung as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy of Religion and Theology.

Christine M Helmer, Chair

Northwestern University

Professor of Religious Studies and German

Kevin Wolfe

Claremont Graduate University

Assistant Professor of Religion

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

Fuller Theological Seminary

Professor of Systematic Theology

## **Abstract**

A Theology of Divine Calling in Light of Karl Barth, A.N. Whitehead, and Meister Eckhart's  
Theological Forms

By

Caleb Cheung

Claremont Graduate University: 2022

This dissertation aims to show how divine calling can be considered a multifaceted reality. The theory of divine calling includes God, humans, the content of the call, and the interaction between God and humans. It embraces a wide range of data: theology, anthropology, metaphysical considerations, and subjective experience. As this dissertation wants to understand divine calling in a multifaceted way, this dissertation examines it from three different perspectives. The theology/philosophy of Karl Barth, A. N. Whitehead, and Meister Eckhart is utilized. They represent three distinctive theological forms: revelational, metaphysical, and experiential. This dissertation studies their theology/philosophy according to their forms and creates conversations among them so that they can mutually illuminate each other. A theology of divine calling is constructed by cross-examining the insights from the three perspectives. Lastly, this dissertation concludes that the divine calling is an ontological relation between God and humans. It can be understood from two perspectives. From the divine perspective, the entire Trinity involves the divine call. God evolves with humans in the cycle of divine call. From the human perspective, humans interact with the divine call and experience the transfiguration of identity.

# Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1 - PROLEGOMENA</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2 SOME TYPICAL USAGES OF CALLING .....	2
1.2.1 <i>Scripture Usage</i> .....	3
1.2.2 <i>Before Reformation</i> .....	4
1.2.3 <i>Protestant Traditions</i> .....	5
1.3 METHODOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL FORM .....	6
1.3.1 <i>Theological Form is not for Categorizing or Generalizing</i> .....	9
1.3.2 <i>The Advantage of Studying Multiple Forms</i> .....	10
1.3.3 <i>Is it Legitimate to Exchange Concepts between Theologies?</i> .....	12
1.3.4 <i>Can One Form be more Legitimate than the Other?</i> .....	13
1.4 THE CHOICE OF FORMS AND REPRESENTATIVES FOR THIS PROJECT .....	14
1.4.1 <i>The Revelational Form</i> .....	15
1.4.2 <i>The Metaphysical Form</i> .....	15
1.4.3 <i>The Experiential Form</i> .....	16
1.5 THE ROADMAP OF EXPLORATIONS .....	17
1.6 THE SCOPE OF THIS PROJECT .....	18
<b>CHAPTER 2 - THE FOUNDATION OF DIVINE CALL: KARL BARTH'S INSIGHTS ON DIVINE CALLING</b> .....	<b>20</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	20
2.2 KARL BARTH'S REVELATIONAL THEOLOGY AND ITS FORM .....	21
2.2.1 <i>Karl Barth's Agenda of Theology</i> .....	21
2.2.2 <i>Theology is an Objective Discipline</i> .....	23
2.2.3 <i>The Wholly Other</i> .....	26
2.2.4 <i>The Word of God</i> .....	28
2.3 THE OBJECTIVITY OF DIVINE CALL .....	31
2.3.1 <i>Realism and Theological Language</i> .....	33
2.3.2 <i>The Pneumatological Principle of Mediation</i> .....	35
2.4 THE DIVINE CALLING REVEALS GOD'S BEING IS IN RELATING .....	39
2.4.1 <i>The Trinitarian Pattern of Relating</i> .....	40
2.4.2 <i>The Humanity of God</i> .....	41
2.4.3 <i>The Acting of God as Event in History</i> .....	44
2.5 THE DIVINE CALL AWAKES THE SEARCH FOR TRUE HUMANITY .....	46
2.5.1 <i>The Image of God</i> .....	46
2.5.2 <i>I and Thou – Being in Encounter</i> .....	49
2.6 THE DIVINE CALL IS SALVATION .....	51
2.6.1 <i>The Dynamic of Christian Life</i> .....	51
2.6.2 <i>Downplay of Subjective Experience</i> .....	53
2.6.3 <i>Freedom in Divine Calling</i> .....	54
2.7 CONCLUSION .....	56

<b>CHAPTER 3 - THE MECHANISM OF DIVINE CALLING: A. N. WHITEHEAD'S INSIGHTS ON DIVINE CALLING .....</b>	<b>59</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	59
3.2 WHITEHEAD'S METAPHYSICS AND ITS FORM .....	60
3.2.1 <i>The Agenda of Whitehead's Philosophy</i> .....	60
3.2.2 <i>From Epistemology to Ontology</i> .....	63
3.2.3 <i>Reality as Events</i> .....	65
3.2.4 <i>The Features of Whitehead's Philosophical Form</i> .....	67
3.3 DIVINE CALLING AND THE THEORY OF GOD .....	69
3.3.1 <i>Dipolar Nature of God</i> .....	72
3.3.2 <i>The Primordial Nature</i> .....	74
3.3.3 <i>Initial Aim</i> .....	77
3.3.4 <i>Consequent Nature</i> .....	80
3.3.4.1 <i>The Consequent Nature and the World</i> .....	82
3.3.4.2 <i>Consequent Nature and Salvation</i> .....	83
3.3.5 <i>The Principle of Creativity and God-World Relation</i> .....	85
3.4 HUMANS AND DIVINE CALLING .....	86
3.4.1 <i>Pan-experientism</i> .....	87
3.4.2 <i>Person and Society</i> .....	88
3.4.3 <i>New Perspective on Subjectivity</i> .....	90
3.4.4 <i>Unity between Being and Acting</i> .....	92
3.4.5 <i>The Experience of Divine Calling</i> .....	93
3.4.6 <i>On Freedom</i> .....	95
3.5 CONCLUSION .....	97
<b>CHAPTER 4 - THE EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE CALLING: MEISTER ECKHART'S MYSTICAL THEOLOGY AND DIVINE CALLING .....</b>	<b>100</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	100
4.2 MEISTER ECKHART'S MYSTICAL THEOLOGY AND ITS FORM .....	101
4.2.1 <i>The Theological Agenda of Meister Eckhart</i> .....	101
4.2.2 <i>The Predicaments of the Natural Human State</i> .....	104
4.2.3 <i>The Ground</i> .....	107
4.2.4 <i>God and Godhead</i> .....	111
4.2.5 <i>Human Being and the Intellect</i> .....	115
4.3 THE THEOLOGY FROM EXPERIENCE .....	119
4.3.1 <i>Detachment</i> .....	119
4.3.2 <i>Grace</i> .....	122
4.3.3 <i>The Birth of the Son in the Intellect</i> .....	124
4.3.4 <i>The Breakthrough</i> .....	127
4.3.5 <i>The Operative Identity</i> .....	128
4.3.6 <i>Experience of New Horizon</i> .....	130
4.4 LIVING ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE CALLING .....	133
4.4.1 <i>From Pure Experience to Actions</i> .....	133
4.4.2 <i>The Plasticity of the Soul</i> .....	136
4.4.3 <i>The Mystic Way of Living</i> .....	137
4.5 CONCLUSION .....	139

<b>CHAPTER 5 - CONSTRUCT A THEOLOGY OF DIVINE CALLING .....</b>	<b>141</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	141
5.2 KARL BARTH: THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF DIVINE CALLING .....	142
5.2.1 <i>The Objectivity of Divine Call</i> .....	143
5.2.2 <i>The Divine Calling Reveals God's Being is in Relating</i> .....	144
5.2.3 <i>The Divine Call Awakes the Search for True Humanity</i> .....	145
5.2.4 <i>The Divine Call is Salvation</i> .....	146
5.3 A. N. WHITEHEAD: THE ONTOLOGICAL STRUCTURE AND MECHANISM OF DIVINE CALLING.....	147
5.3.1 <i>Divine Calling and The Theory of God</i> .....	147
5.3.1.1 The Primordial Nature.....	147
5.3.1.2 Initial Aim .....	148
5.3.1.3 Consequent Nature .....	149
5.3.2 <i>Humans and Divine Calling</i> .....	150
5.4 MEISTER ECKHART: THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE CALLING.....	152
5.4.1 <i>The Theology from Experience</i> .....	152
5.4.1.1 The Birth of the Son in the Intellect .....	153
5.4.1.2 The Breakthrough .....	154
5.4.1.3 Experience of New Horizon.....	154
5.4.2 <i>Living According to the Divine Calling</i> .....	155
5.5 DIVINE CALLING IS EVENT .....	156
5.5.1 <i>Barth: Divine Calling is God's Giving Process in History</i> .....	157
5.5.2 <i>Whitehead: Divine Calling is a Perpetual Constituting Process</i> .....	157
5.5.3 <i>Eckhart: Divine Calling is Union in Participation</i> .....	158
5.6 THE DIVINE CYCLE OF CALLING .....	159
5.6.1 <i>God is the Initiator of the Divine Call</i> .....	160
5.6.2 <i>The Interiority of Divine Calling</i> .....	161
5.6.3 <i>God Incorporates Human Responses of Divine Call into Godself</i> .....	163
5.7 THE TRANSFIGURATION OF IDENTITY .....	165
5.7.1 <i>Barth: True Identity is in Christ</i> .....	165
5.7.2 <i>Whitehead: Identity is Contingence upon Divine Calling</i> .....	166
5.7.3 <i>Eckhart: Identity is Non-Difference</i> .....	167
5.8 APPLICATIONS .....	169
5.8.1 <i>Teaching divine calling as an aspect of life</i> .....	169
5.8.2 <i>Divine calling and identity formation</i> .....	169
5.9 FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS .....	170
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>178</b>
ALBERTO GIACOMETTI'S SKETCHING STYLE AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD.....	178



# Chapter 1 - Prolegomena

## 1.1 Introduction

Christians are defined as people who are called by God in Scripture. Paul said, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, *who are called* according to his purpose.” (Rom 8:28 NRSV) “Calling” should be an essential subject for understanding Christianity according to the apostle Paul. However, the discussion of divine calling is surprisingly rare. What is calling? The subject of calling is not even included in many contemporary theology textbooks.<sup>1</sup> Calling in contemporary use usually refers to vocation, a synonym of occupation or job. According to *Merriam-Webster dictionary*, calling is “1. a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence. 2. the vocation or profession in which one customarily engages.”<sup>2</sup> The discussions of calling often focus on the functional aspect related to profession, livelihood, or occupation.

The soteriological aspect of calling is not often taught except among Christians in the Reformed tradition. It is no surprise that the article “Calling” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* defines calling as a technical theological term used in Reformed theology. The article starts, “As a technical theological term the word came into use in Reformation theology for the Divine act whereby those destined for salvation are persuaded to accept the Gosepl ...”<sup>3</sup> Reformed theologians believe in the doctrine of irresistible grace, so they teach the concept of effectual calling. They maintain that calling is the work of the Holy Spirit to lead a person to

---

<sup>1</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, Third ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013). Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Sixth Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2017). Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology, Third ed.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). Amos Yong, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014)

<sup>2</sup> “Calling,” in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/calling>. Accessed 10 July 2021.

<sup>3</sup> “Calling,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 265.

salvation. Another group who is interested in the theological aspect of calling is Evangelicals.<sup>4</sup> They emphasize subjective conversion experience. The later part of the article “Calling” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, writes, “In much Evangelical Christianity of more recent times the Call of God takes a very important place in the immediate and conscious conversion which is considered normal and necessary in the religious life of every Christian.”<sup>5</sup> Calling is a significant concept for Evangelicals because they link calling to conversion experience. If one does not affiliate with Reformed theology or with a concern for personal conversion, the soteriological aspect of divine calling is often forgotten.

My aim in this dissertation is to revive the soteriological discussion of divine calling among these two groups of Christians as well as extend the discussion to other Christian groups. A theology of divine calling as I insist throughout this work captures the dynamic interaction between God and humans. Thus I locate the concept of divine calling in this interaction, which includes discussion of divine address to humans, metaphysics, and mysticism. I investigate the theologies and philosophies of Karl Barth, Alfred North Whitehead, and Meister Eckhart and work out some of their insights to construct a contemporary theology of divine calling. My main argument is that divine calling is God’s salvific action to establish an ontological relation between God’s self and humans, whereby divine grace flows to induce a new identity and conversion experience in humans.

## **1.2 Some Typical Usages of Calling**

The term “calling” can be confusing because it could refer to a wide range of meanings. I trace the typical usages of calling in the following sections.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Scot Mcknight, *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); Beverly Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*, *Overtures to Biblical Theology* 20 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Richard Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> “Calling,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 266.

### 1.2.1 Scripture Usage

In the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, the concept of calling is closely related to election. God called a specific individual or a group of people because God elected them to be a part of God's commission. Deutero-Isaiah notes: "But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, 'You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off.'" (Isaiah 41:8-9 NRSV) People are called because they are elected to participate in God's salvation plan for the world. God called Abraham to bless the world through the descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:2-3). God called Moses to deliver Israelites from the slavery of Egypt (cf. Ex. 3:8). God also called prophets to proclaim God's words, e.g. Isaiah (cf. Isa 6:13) and Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 1:2-10). The prophets, as the Old Testament recounts, were called to become God's servants in order to carry out God's salvation plan in the world.

The New Testament's notion of calling builds on the Old Testament. Jesus called the twelve disciples to be the future leaders of the church (cf. Luke 6:12-16). Like the Old Testament, the disciples were called to God's commission into the world. They were charged to participate in God's purpose and preach the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). Furthermore, the relationship dimension is added to Jesus' calling. Jesus said, "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father." (John 15:15 NRSV) The disciples are no longer called servants; they are God's friends. Calling not only summons Christians into God's commission but also to have relationship with God.

Paul extended the meaning of calling further. He used the language of calling to designate salvation and the model of life that emerges from it. He encouraged the Thessalonians "lead a life

worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.” (1 Thess. 2:12 NRSV) He also wrote, “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” (Eph. 4:1 NRSV) Hence, for Paul, calling is salvific. Christians are called to have relationship with God, so that they are saved. They also become God’s own, and participate in God’s purpose in the world.

### **1.2.2 Before Reformation**

Before Reformation, the church developed the concept of divine calling in two directions. On the one hand, divine calling is designated as God’s operative grace to humans. Humans obtain salvation when they are called. Augustine wrote, “But the person on whom he has mercy he calls in such a way as he knows is appropriate for him, so that he may not reject him who calls.”<sup>6</sup> Aquinas also wrote, “the remission of sins seems to be the same as being called, for whoever is called is afar off, and we are afar off from God by sin. But one is called before being justified according to Rom. 8:30: ‘And whom He called, them He also justified.’”<sup>7</sup> Thus, divine calling is the effect of salvation.

On the other hand, divine calling is equivalent to an appointment to religious office. The medieval church often associated calling with the religious life of clergy members, monks, and nuns. A person’s calling into a religious office is met with demonstrating one’s complete commitment to God and God’s mission in the world. Thus, monasteries required their members the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Vows were intended for spiritual abstaining from worldly goods, so that one could respond to God’s call wholeheartedly. Furthermore, calling for the medieval church was also correlated to the ontological status of the religious personnel. Clergy

---

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, trans. and ed. Baniface Ramsey and Raymond Canning (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2008), 195.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948), 1-2.113.3.

and laity were considered to be different classes of people.<sup>8</sup> The clergy and vowed religious were considered to be called by God. This calling, as medieval theologians understood it, resulted in an ontological change in their persons. They are closer to God. Such ontological status is unchangeable and life-long. Thus, clergy or monastics were not permitted to turn back to secular life.

### **1.2.3 Protestant Traditions**

In the early sixteenth century, Martin Luther protested the ontological differences between vowed religious and laity. He argued that God calls all Christians instead of just the clergy.<sup>9</sup> He thereby introduced this idea of the priesthood of all believers into the Protestant churches. The divine call is extended to every Christian and must be contextualized in the context of daily works. Christians are called to serve God in all walks of life.<sup>10</sup> According to Luther, all believers inherit the priesthood by virtue of their calling.

The Calvinist theologians of the seventeenth century are important participants in this discussion of calling. They connected calling to salvation. Calvinist theologians believe that God's grace is irresistible. When persons are called by God, they are the recipients of God's grace. Hence, the divine calling designates the operation of effective grace.<sup>11</sup> In the Shorter Westminster Catechism (1647) "Question 31, What is effectual calling? Ans. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus

---

<sup>8</sup> H. Echternach, "Work, Vocation, Calling," *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Julius Bodensieck, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965) 3.2502-2505.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 39-40.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *Luther's Works, Vol. 36: Word and Sacrament II*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann and Abdel R. Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 113.

<sup>11</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1994), 692

Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, Calvinists believed that the divine calling is God’s work in the human soul to activate salvation.

Evangelical Christian theologians in the twentieth century reaffirmed the soteriological significance of the divine calling. Evangelical faith according to Kenneth Collin has to do with God’s personal address to individuals in the call to faith.<sup>13</sup> Hence, Evangelical Christians practice altar call to invite people to accept salvation. They also believe that the reception of the calling will induce a conversion experience.<sup>14</sup> Although Evangelical theologians include divine calling in the discussion of soteriology,<sup>15</sup> the emphasis is often on subjective experience. They rarely discuss divine call in relation to the theology proper or theological anthropology.

I aim to show in this dissertation how divine calling can be considered a multifaceted reality. The theory of divine calling includes God, the caller, humans, the being called, the content of the call, and the interaction between God and humans. It embraces a wide range of data: theology, anthropology, metaphysical considerations, subjective experience. Hence, I suggest a method that can utilize data from various traditions and disciplines, so that the multifaceted interaction between God and humans can be stipulated and holistically represented.

### **1.3 Methodology and Theological Form**

This dissertation suggests that divine calling can be considered a multifaceted reality. I need to investigate it from different perspectives. Hence, I propose to examine it through different theological forms. This section will elaborate my definition of theological form, and how will I use it in this investigation.

---

<sup>12</sup> “Short Catechism” *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, <https://opc.org/sc.html>. Accessed 10 July 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth J. Collin, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley’s Theology* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion: Why Faith is Always Personal but Never Private* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 78.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 411-415.

What is theology? First, theology is not revelation. It is not identical with truth but does make truth claims. Revelation is the encounter of God and humans. It cannot be fully captured in language or logic. There is always an ‘extra’ beyond language or the concept in the relation between humans and God. The direct encounter of God is the primary activity. Theology is secondary because it conceptualizes the encounter. Thus, theology is a secondary rationalization process so that the divine encounter can be transmitted through human language.<sup>16</sup> Theology can be considered the interpretation of revelation because it constructs the content of revelation through human reason, bias, and contextual concerns. Put it differently, theology is a product derived from revelation but conditioned by human limitations, such as language, rational framework, historical concern, and personal temperament, among other dimensions. Different theologians, therefore, construct different theologies depending upon their contemporary conditions and concerns.

The framework which embedded the conditions and concerns of the theologian becomes a theological form. There is no difference between theology and other types of communications in finite language; they are discursive prose and limited by time and spatial continuum. Reality manifests itself in its multifaceted nature, but a theologian cannot simultaneously convey a nexus of messages. She may want to express the multifaceted experience of reality, yet the expression is constrained by discursive reason (except, of course, if she is writing poetry or painting). She has to present her thoughts in a coherent and logical manner. To present thought coherently and logically, a person has to set her priorities and present her thoughts in time-dependent sequences. All theologians have to prioritize and organize their messages into meaningful and presentable

---

<sup>16</sup> See Christine Helmer, *Theology and the End of Doctrine* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 59-105.

sequences. The way of conveying the message combined with the theologian's concern and conditions thus becomes the theologians' form.

Theologian John Wesley (1703-1791) observed that theology is built upon four cornerstones, namely scripture/revelation, reason, experience, and tradition. These are four authoritative sources for theology.<sup>17</sup> Generally speaking, theologians construct theologies based upon these four categories of sources. Nevertheless, theologians do not assign the resources in the same weight.<sup>18</sup> One theologian may prioritize one source over the other. While a theologian prioritizes one source over the others, the prioritized source will become the dominant framework for selecting and arranging data. For example, John Calvin and Karl Barth chose revelation as the dominant source to frame their theologies. Eighteenth-century English Deists chose reason as the dominant source to frame their theologies. Friedrich Schleiermacher and Meister Eckhart chose experience as dominant source to frame their theologies. Thomas Aquinas, placed equal priorities in two sources, chose both revelation and reason together to construct his theology.

When one source is chosen over the others, it becomes the overarching structure through which theological contents are prioritized and organized. The overarching structure is the form of theology. It shapes the development of theology. All the 'raw materials' are organized through the form, so that they can be presented logically. The form becomes the specific perspective from which theological truth becomes accessible.

I insist that theology without form is inaccessible. The theological form is an overarching structure with the choices of priorities, vocabularies, internal logic, and cultural/linguistic reference. Theology is shaped by its form in order that it becomes accessible to audiences. Each

---

<sup>17</sup> Isaac Boaheng, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral and Contemporary" *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology*, vol. 2 no. 3, August 2020, pp 87-95.

<sup>18</sup> David A Pailin, *The Anthropological Character of Theology: Conditioning Theological Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4-5.



theology is a distinctive embodiment of its specific form. It is distinctive in itself and is enclosed in its own formal narrative. With the distinctive choices embedded in the theological form, the theological message is shaped and communicated in a specific way.

The relation between the form and the content is not unilateral but dialectic. The form shapes the materials; hence the materials have the imprint of the form. However, the form is not fixed; it adjusts itself to accommodate available materials. There are different types of forms, and each form inherits its own strength and weakness. Some contents may be easy to articulate in a certain form, yet impossible to articulate in another. Put differently, the form shapes theology in a specific way in order that the specific aspect of truth is singled out. In conclusion, I use the term ‘theologian form’ to denote the unique perspective in theology that embodies the unique concern to formulate questions and answers.

### **1.3.1 Theological Form is not for Categorizing or Generalizing**

My use of ‘form’ in this dissertation refers to a group of theologies with similar preferences or choices. It is for labeling function rather than categorizing theologies. There is much literature about categorizing theologies into types or models.<sup>19</sup> Those studies attempt to find common features among a group of similar theologies; then, they compare and analyze them according to their categories. Generally speaking, there are two ways of putting theologies in categories. The first way is to have preset categories in place; then theologies are put into the preset categories.<sup>20</sup> The second way is to have preset agenda in place; one traces the features of theologies corresponding to the agenda, then she groups theologies according to the agenda-determined

---

<sup>19</sup> For example Hugh Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1937); Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Justo L. Gonzalez, *Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Hugh Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1937).

categories.<sup>21</sup> The drawback of both methods is that they already have something in place and then put the theologies into the predetermined categories. When theologies are evaluated by predetermined categories, the uniqueness of an individual theology would easily be overlooked.

Form is not a platonic autonomy that exists beyond a particular theology. Thus one cannot use form to categorize theologies. Studying theology with its form does not aim to generalize theologies into some distinctive features. It also does not attempt to contour theologies in any predetermined structures. I believe that any attempt to extract the kernel of theology from its shell is a betrayal of theology. It violates the integrity of theology. I may, for the sake of convenience, label Hegel's theology as a theology with metaphysical form. Nevertheless, nobody should confuse Whitehead's metaphysical form with Hegel's. The label of the form is to refer to a group of theologies with a similar preference of choices. The form is a unique container of a specific theology. Each theology is unique; so is its form. Studying theology according to its form allows us to better understand a theology per se. It helps us recognize a theology's own style, overarching choices, and priorities of ordering materials so that the individuality of the theology is respected. In short, a theological form embodies the unique perspective of a particular theology.

### **1.3.2 The Advantage of Studying Multiple Forms**

While form gives us a privileged perspective to access a particular aspect of truth, it also obscures other aspects. I argue that form is the vantage point to access the truth in theology. The materials are framed in a specific form so that the content can be conveyed. While life is ambiguous and reality is multi-dimensional,<sup>22</sup> a perspective also is a limiter to reality. When one perspective is chosen, it becomes the fixed perspective. The fixed perspective blocks us from seeing the other dimensions of reality. For example, if reality is a cube that is publicly displayed. The cube has six

---

<sup>21</sup> Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> John R. Franke, *Manifold Witness: The Plurality of Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009).

sides. However, nobody can see the six sides of the cube at the same time. Every person can only occupy one position at a time and describe the cube from that particular perspective. The perspective hence reveals and obscures reality at the same time. A theological form provides a specific perspective to describe the truth it tries to represent. However, its perspective is selective, prioritized, and not pervasive. Insofar as the form can only offer one fixed perspective to see reality, each form is incomplete by itself to investigate reality. Thus, each theological form needs other forms to complete each other in the quest for truth.

I believe that studying different theological forms together creates a space of conversation between them. They can illuminate each other. Different theological forms can provide different perspectives, which lead to a better understanding of the many ‘layers’ of the subject matter. While theologians shape their materials through the forms, some contents are highlighted, and others fade into the background. The study of form allows us to understand the particular perspective inherited in theology. Nevertheless, the whole truth cannot be better understood until various perspectives are studied together. Studying theologies together according to their forms is not unlike using a microscope to examine a multi-layered sample. One tunes the microscope to a particular focal length in order to see a specific stratum. When the focus is set on the specific stratum, other layers become out of focus and blur out. However, she does not stop seeing only one stratum; she continues to tune the microscope at various focal lengths to examine and compare various strata. As a result, the multilayer sample is better understood. Likewise, the truth can be better understood when we examine it one aspect at a time and then combine various aspects altogether.

There is no single theology or theological form that can holistically capture the immense richness of the divine-human interplay. Thus, I propose to examine the divine-human encounter through multiple theological forms.

### 1.3.3 Is it Legitimate to Exchange Concepts between Theologies?

I have explained that each theological form provides the unique framework to formulate its subject matter. As each theological form inherits its own concerns, grammar, and vocabularies, the insights from a specific theology may only be meaningful within its form. In other words, are conservations of theologies from different forms beneficial? Is it legitimate to exchange concepts across different theological forms? I think the answer lies in the view of language.

The nature of language has been widely debated since the nineteenth century. Ludwig Wittgenstein, a Cambridge philosopher, proposes that language does not have universal meaning. Language inherits its meaning based upon its function within language games.<sup>23</sup> Each language game is a self-contained sphere that has its own rule and grammar. Sensible meaning can only be derived within a language game. It cannot cross over to another language game. Theologian George Lindbeck is one prominent proponent of applying the theory of language games to theology.<sup>24</sup> Lindbeck notices that theological languages are divisive. Theologies are incompatible, and they are segregated from each other. In terms of semantic meaning, theologies could hardly cross over to others. It is even harder to get a universal meaning in theologies. Lindbeck argues that the segregation of theologies is similar to the segregation of language games. There is no truth value in theology outside of its own tradition and community.<sup>25</sup> Hence, the role of theology is merely to regulate its own religious community.<sup>26</sup> In short, theology, according to Lindbeck, is not about truth claims but its regulatory functions within its own communities.

---

<sup>23</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Blackwell, 1953).

<sup>24</sup> George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984).

<sup>25</sup> George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 120.

I agree with Lindbeck that each theology is a self-contained sphere. Each theology contains in its form. Thus a theology cannot coalesce to other theologies without violating its own integrity. However, Lindbeck's theory is based on one assumption: language is disconnected from the truth it tries to represent; there is no truth claim in language. This assumption I cannot agree with. I believe that truth elements are still present in theology because theology does not totally disconnect from the reality it tries to relate to. As far as there is some degree of connection between theology and the reality it relates, truth is present in theology.

I believe that the study of different theologies together is beneficial. Some may argue that each theological tradition is a particular formulation in response to the concerns of its own time. Theologies ask and answer different questions. Hence, it is futile to study theologies side by side. However, I argue that as far as there is still truth claim in theology, truth claims can shed light on each other in conversation. Thus, I believe that studying different theologies together can create a space of dialogue so that the truth elements can illuminate each other.

#### **1.3.4 Can One Form be more Legitimate than the Other?**

In the book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, philosopher Thomas Kuhn traced the scientific history and introduced the famous concept called a 'paradigm shift.' He argued that the operational paradigm governs the study of science in its age.<sup>27</sup> The paradigm is the overarching structure that controls and shapes the data on hand. The theological form is similar to Kuhn's paradigm in the measure that both pay attention to the controlling and shaping functions in collecting and organizing data. However, according to Kuhn's model, the latest paradigm supersedes the previous one. There is only one 'valid' paradigm available at a time. Nevertheless, I believe that there is no

---

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

single ‘valid’ form or theology. I have explained that each theological form only captures an aspect of reality. As there are many legitimate aspects in reality, so are the theological forms.

Studying different theologies together can help us avoid the extremes of both religious totalitarianism and theological monism. The former insists that there is only one true theology that embodies all the truth claims. All other incompatible theologies are simply false. Such a view cuts off theological dialogues and endorses intolerants. The latter proposes that theologies are only different in semantics. The differences in theologies are negligible because they speak the same truth. Theological monism downplays the real differences in theologies and trims down theologies to the lowest common denominator. If truth is reduced to the lowest common denominator among theologies, reality’s multifaceted and ambiguous nature is lost. In short, studying multiple theological forms is necessary for understanding reality.

#### **1.4 The Choice of Forms and Representatives for this project**

Revelation, reason, tradition, experience are four primary sources of theological authority according to Wesley. I maintain that tradition is different from the other three sources because it is a compilation of other sources. Generally speaking, tradition refers to theological heritage expressed in doctrinal formulations, statements of faith, or accumulated beliefs and practices. These theological heritages are products of biblical interpretations, philosophical considerations, and experiential wisdom passed down through the centuries. In other words, tradition is a historical integration of the other three sources.

I have explained that theological form is closely linked to the choice and presentation of sources. Revelational, philosophical, and experiential are three prominent theological forms corresponding to three sources in the history of Christian theology. This dissertation adopts insights from these three theological forms to construct a theology of divine calling. This section

will explain why I chose Karl Barth, Alfred North Whitehead, and Meister Eckhart as representative thinkers for my project.

#### **1.4.1 The Revelational Form**

Christianity claims itself as a revealed religion. It claims to be found upon the revelational events in the stage of human history. As such, some theologians revert to revelation as the source for their theological knowledge. The revelational form is developed upon using revelation as the governing theorem in the process of theological thinking. Swiss theology Karl Barth (c. 1886-1968) is an excellent representative of using the revelational form. Barth aims to build his entire theological system on the revelation of Christ.<sup>28</sup> Barth insists that the Christ event is the self-revelation of God, which becomes the center of his theology.<sup>29</sup> Barth's theology is an excellent showcase of revelational form because Barth insists upon the priority of the Christ event over any philosophical commitment.

I explore Barth's theology in this dissertation in order to examine how revelation can be construed in divine calling. I ask the question concerning how revelation can be considered a divine calling, in what way, and particularly how this understanding can be connected to salvation.

#### **1.4.2 The Metaphysical Form**

Theology, while based on revelation, is an intellectual quest for divine truth. Reason is indispensable to this task. The philosophical form privileges how natural reason can be used to inform theological construction. The central philosophical question I ask in this dissertation concerns the God-human relation. The metaphysical description of this relation is central in order to situate the divine calling within this question. The British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead

---

<sup>28</sup> Gary Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 38.

<sup>29</sup> Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. Darrel L. Guder and Judith J. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 57.

(c. 1861-1947) was an innovative thinker who conceptualized metaphysics that could explain the reciprocity between divine-human interaction. While his main focus was the underlying scheme of reality he termed actual occasions, I consult Whitehead in order to show how his metaphysics can help understand the divine calling as a reciprocal movement between God and humans.

### **1.4.3 The Experiential Form**

Along with magisterium theology, mysticism and mystical theology never cease to exist throughout church history. Mystical theology creates its own grammar, logic, and vocabularies to convey the truth acquired in experience. Mystical theology is a unique branch of theology; we could hardly find any parallel elsewhere. The authoritative source of mystical theology is experience. Mystical theology employs mystical experience as its overarching framework to shape other materials. All theological truths are compiled according to or against the mystical experience.

I choose German mystic Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1328) as a representative of experiential form in this project. Although there are many mystics throughout Christian history, not many developed their thought comprehensively. On the contrary, Eckhart developed a comprehensive view of God, the world, and humans. He is arguably one of the most influential and learned mystics in Christianity.

What I aim to do in this dissertation is to delineate the revelational, metaphysical, and experiential forms of the three theologians/philosophers under consideration. I extensively describe the respective resources they bring to the theological table. And I then extract insights from these three forms in order to construct a theology of God's calling. My main focus is the divine-human interaction that situates the specification of the divine calling. Furthermore, I think that a multivalent approach to the divine-human interaction is important for divine calling. Divine calling involves a revelational, metaphysical, and experiential dimension, such that it concentrates



these three sources in the divine-human relation. In this project, I aim to create a conversation between theologies of the three thinkers so that they can mutually illuminate each other on the subject matter of divine calling

## **1.5 The Roadmap of Explorations**

I have organized this dissertation into three substantive chapters, each of which deals extensively with the divine-human relation from particular perspectives. I explore the theological forms of the three thinkers through their theological agendas as well as the main themes that shape their systems.

In chapter two, I first consider Karl Barth's theology in order to explore how he insists on an objective dimension to revelation. What Barth means by objective has to do with his understanding of revelation. Barth's theology of revelation is, as he insists throughout his corpus, based on the triune God who remains sovereign throughout revelation. Furthermore, I am interested in how Barth's understanding of the individuality of divine calling is related to this objectivity, primarily by his Christology.

In chapter three, I consider the significance of Alfred North Whitehead's innovative metaphysics in order to explore his understanding of the divine-human interaction. I am primarily interested in Whitehead's understanding of the divine persuasion mechanism because I think that this idea offers resources to help us understand divine calling as persuasive rather than imperative. Even though some theologians might not be happy with Whitehead's challenge to the doctrine of divine unchangeability, I find that his innovations regarding divine-world reciprocity are fascinating to stipulate a notion of calling that is dynamic rather than one-directional.

In chapter four, I address Meister Eckhart's mysticism in order to open up the idea that the divine calling is ontologically rooted in something that Eckhart calls the ground. Eckhart's thought of connecting to the ground, as I explore it, is central to a notion of divine calling that is necessary

rather than contingent. I see that Eckhart's notion of mystical union with the ground can shed light on the experience of divine calling. Such experience leads to a perfect identity with God.

In the concluding chapter, I crystalize insights from the three thinkers to construct a theology of divine calling. I will show the divine calling, including three essential aspects. First, its theological foundation depends upon the revelational event of Jesus Christ. Second, it operates through the persuasive mechanism built in the metaphysical structure in the process. Third, it creates experiences of union with God and creation. I thus use multifaceted resources for understanding reality in order to show that the divine calling is a robust concept for theology and Christianity today.

## **1.6 The Scope of this Project**

All three thinkers discussed in this dissertation developed their theologies over extended periods. They produced a good size of literature. In order to make this project manageable, I select from the particular texts that I consider representative. I look at sections from Karl Barth's system of theology, the *Church Dogmatics*, which represents his mature theology.<sup>30</sup> For representative texts in Whitehead's corpus, I survey his *Process and Reality*, which is the text of his Gifford Lectures that he gave in 1945-65. Whitehead considered this work as his contribution to the construction of his metaphysics.<sup>31</sup> For Meister Eckhart, I consider mainly some sample sermons that he preached in German. These works are collected in *The Complete Mystical Words of Meister Eckhart*, translated by Maurice O'C Walshe.<sup>32</sup> Eckhart's Latin works were written for academic purposes, which were composed according to rules three centuries before him. However, his German works

---

<sup>30</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, 4 vols*, ed. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-75).

<sup>31</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, corrected ed., ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 3.

<sup>32</sup> Maurice O'C Walshe, ed. and trans., *The Complete Mystical Words of Meister Eckhart* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2010).

are recognized as the most significant reflection of this thought, as Eckhartian scholar Reiner Schurmann notes.<sup>33</sup>

My project will not argue for a ‘correct’ interpretation of each of the three thinkers. I do not aim to offer a complete study of their theologies. This project also will not be a complete study of the theological form of each thinker. A comprehensive study of the theological form on one of the three thinkers will be justified as a dissertation on its own. This project mainly focuses on discussing the divine calling in light of the forms of the three thinkers.

---

<sup>33</sup> Reiner Schurmann, *Wandering Joy: Meister Eckhart’s Mystical Philosophy* (Lindisfrne Books, 2001), xvii.

## Chapter 2 - The Foundation of Divine Call: Karl Barth's Insights on Divine Calling

### 2.1 Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, humanity faced challenges that had never been met before. In 1914, the First World War broke out. It was the first time in history that modernized technology was employed for mass killing. Civil societies were pushed to the brink of crisis. "Does God really care provided God exists?" many people asked in these disheartening times. How could the gospel still be relevant in crisis? As a pastor and theologian, Karl Barth wrote his famous book *The Epistle to the Romans* in 1919 to explicate that humans need the gospel more than ever – God will meet humans in crisis.<sup>34</sup> The revelation of God, Barth claimed, shows God's self in our crisis and demands humans to relate to God.

Throughout Barth's academic career, he searches to construct theology according to three major concerns: a) God is the objective reality who is sovereign and free from human subjectivity, b) humans can encounter the 'real' God through revelation, c) the encountering with God determines who humans are as well as how humans should live as human beings. The three concerns of Barth coincide with the interest in the theory of divine calling. Insofar as the divine calling concerns that God is an objective reality reaching out to humans, Barth's theology of revelation can be the theological foundation to explain how the triune self of sovereign God relates to humans through Jesus Christ, whereby humans are restored to true humanity in the encounter.

This chapter first introduces Karl Barth's theology by expounding his theological form. Then, I explore his arguments on the objectivity of theology in order to maintain the objectivity of

---

<sup>34</sup> Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 10.

the divine call. Next, I expound on Barth's doctrine of Trinity and election to sketch the pattern of God's way of relating to humans. This pattern sets up my account of divine calling in Barth by locating the motivation for the divine call in the Trinity. Further, I elaborate on the awaking of new humanity as the result of the divine call. The divine call, as I argue, is an implication of Barth's theology, is initiated by God, and its effect is to create a new human person who is capable of responding to God. Finally, I establish that the divine call is salvation, and I spell out some of its implications for the Christian life.

## **2.2 Karl Barth's Revelational Theology and Its Form**

Barth was driven to understand the crisis in his times. His theology should be interpreted in the light of this struggle during the crisis. Barth's theology is confrontational because he perceived that the enterprise of theology was in danger. According to Barth, the anthropocentric approach of theology betrayed the very soul of theology.<sup>35</sup> In response, Barth focused almost exclusively on recovering what he thought was the proper object of theology, namely God. In times of crisis, theology must reorient its attention to God alone.

### **2.2.1 Karl Barth's Agenda of Theology**

Since the eighteenth century, many philosophers have believed that legitimate knowledge of God is impossible. In the important book *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant argues that objective knowledge of God is impossible because the human mind is incapable of knowing the essence of things (thing-in-itself), which belongs to the noumenal world. Legitimate knowledge only belongs to the realm of the phenomenal because it can be deduced from observable data. Kant's proposal fundamentally destroyed metaphysics as well as theology as the science of

---

<sup>35</sup> Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Grover Foley (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 15-25. Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Text*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1976), 97.

knowing the thing-in-itself. As humans cannot access divine knowledge directly, theologians, therefore, try to connect to the knowledge of God through inferences from the phenomenal world. Since Kant, the paradigm of theology shifted from the study of the doctrine of God to the study of religious phenomena. Anthropology thus became the entry point for theology.<sup>36</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the reputation of theology was further discredited. German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach argued that religion is just a human product. In his book *The Essence of Christianity*, he traced the anthropological root of Christianity and argued that the essence of religion is the reflection of human nature. The idea of God is either a projection of human nature or a product of the alienation from human consciousness.<sup>37</sup> To Barth, Feuerbach represented what was problematic with the modern world and its turn to anthropology. Barth studied Feuerbach's criticisms and concluded that Feuerbach's position was correct on the condition that theology was constructed based on human givens.

Barth also realized the problem of the anthropological approach to theology when he was studying with his teachers. Barth realized that the gospel message was confused with human ideals. He understood that the gospel was inevitably betrayed when human ideals were confused with the gospel message. If God's transcendence is dissolved into human experience, theology will lose its power to confront the sinfulness in human nature; it will only become a human projection. As a result, theology would only support the worldly status quo.<sup>38</sup> Barth was convinced that the problem of modern theology was to confuse theology with anthropology. When theology cannot separate itself from human ideologies, it cannot confront them. Instead, it is conformed to them. Barth apprehended that theology could only earn its credibility back by distancing itself from

---

<sup>36</sup> Gary Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 43.

<sup>37</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 29-30.

<sup>38</sup> Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*, 38.

anthropology. For Barth, the theological enterprise stands or falls by avoiding the anthropocentric temptations.<sup>39</sup> Hence, he determined to break with modern theology and seek new ground.

In Barth's view, the new theological paradigm must focus exclusively on God. Barth insisted that God must be the center, the periphery, and the entirety of theology—nothing more, nothing less.<sup>40</sup> According to Barth, the true knowledge of God can only come through acknowledging God as Lord. There is no shortcut to knowing God without upholding God's sovereignty through and through. Humans can only know God as The Lord; otherwise, humans know only idols. Thus, Barth single-mindedly emphasizes the sovereignty of God in his theology.<sup>41</sup> God, for Barth, is the ultimate reality;<sup>42</sup> thereby, nothing is 'real' without referring to God. Thus, every theological topic must start from God as the foundation.

Barth necessarily turns to the concept of revelation in order to ground all theological claims about God in God's self. When God reveals God's self as Lord, God is both the control and the content of the message.<sup>43</sup> Barth intentionally brings every aspect of theological exploration into the light of revelation. In other words, God's revelation determines the premises as well as subject matters of theology. God is the center and the whole of theology for Barth. Authentic theology is based upon the true knowledge of God through revelation.

### **2.2.2 Theology is an Objective Discipline**

While Barth anchors theology to revelation, he still considers theology as a discipline that can make objective claims. Barth argues that every scientific discipline devises its own apparatus and

---

<sup>39</sup> Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*, 42-46.

<sup>40</sup> William Stacy Johnson, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>41</sup> Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology* trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. Darrel L. Guder and Judith J. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 13.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 27-28.

<sup>43</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 57.

methodology to investigate the subject matter.<sup>44</sup> Theology must also determine its investigation method corresponding to its data rather than vice versa. Barth asks, what/who is the subject of theology? God, he answers, who is living, and not dead.<sup>45</sup> So, God is not a dead object for studying; instead, God is the subject that determines how theologians study the divine being.<sup>46</sup> This concept of revelation is crucial for Barth, who is committed to the idea that God reveals God's self as the Word of God. As God reveals God's self to humans as Lord in the Word of God, so the Word of God should be the epistemological priority and framework in theology.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, Barth insists that the Word of God is not only the data of theology; it confronts theologians and scatters the presuppositions and frameworks of their theologies.<sup>48</sup> To Barth, revelation is the autonomy of human intentions. It confronts human ideals. Because of this confrontational nature of revelation, Barth claims 'religion as unbelief.'<sup>49</sup> Barth is hostile to the notion of 'religion.' Religion, according to Barth, symbolizes a human attempt to rebel against revelation. Religion tries to institutionalize revelation, as it wants to capture and confine God in human boundaries. German theologian Eberhard Busch who was a close associate of Barth captures Barth's thought and writes, "when religion is understood as the presupposition, the criterion, and the necessary framework of revelation,"<sup>50</sup> revelation then would inevitably be "understood as a predicate or one possibility among many others within the range of the given, as something that humans can have and know 'apart from revelation.'"<sup>51</sup> If religion were a guarantor

---

<sup>44</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, III/2, trans. Harold Knight et. al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 12-13. All subsequent references to this text are cited as CD.

<sup>47</sup> CD III/2, 13.

<sup>48</sup> CD III/2, 51-53.

<sup>49</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, I/2, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 297.

<sup>50</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 142.

<sup>51</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 142.



of revelation, the very nature of revelation would be seriously distorted. According to Barth, when the significance of revelation is lost, every false claim of divine knowledge can germinate.

Barth differentiates theology from the knowledge of God. To Barth, the knowledge of God is the result of the revelation, which is an act of God. Revelation is a dynamic act of God, which cannot be conceptualized or objectified by humans. However, theology is human activity. Barth, influenced by St. Anselm's methodology,<sup>52</sup> believes that theology is a reflective activity based upon revelation. Theology is a human response that is determined by the objectivity of God. Thus, theology cannot be a fixed system because God's act is not fixed. As an American scholar William Stacy Johnson points out, Barth uses the imagery of a wheel without periphery to describe the open nature of theology vividly.<sup>53</sup> Theology needs revision continuously so that the dynamic relationship between God and the world can be adequately reflected.

As Barth understands the true knowledge of God cannot be derived from the anthropocentric theological endeavor, the following two themes appear consistently in his theology: a) God is the wholly other, b) God's sole revelation is the Word of God. The following sections explicit how these two themes inform Barth's theology in order to explain how Barth connects revelation and theology. This connection is significant to my theme of divine calling because, as I track in this chapter, Barth's exclusive focus on revelation for knowledge of God is central to his understanding of theology as a human response based on knowledge of God.

---

<sup>52</sup> Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 205.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 22.

### 2.2.3 The Wholly Other

Barth begins his theology by declaring that there is no point of contact between human and divine.<sup>54</sup> Decisively breaking with his contemporaries, Barth blocks every possible hope of the knowledge of God from human initiative. He argues that divine knowledge for humans is impossible for two reasons. First, God is the ‘wholly-other.’<sup>55</sup> Barth, following Kierkegaard, insists on a categorical difference between God and humans.<sup>56</sup> The gulf between creator and creature is so vast that creatures never have a chance to cross. Second, human nature is poisoned by sin. There is no innate faculty residual in humans that can deduce any knowledge of God. Consequently, there is no capacity of humans to access the knowledge of God. The method of *analogia entis* is impossible because God is not a being similar to humans.<sup>57</sup> Any attempt at natural theology creates only idols.<sup>58</sup> With his famous *No!* replied to Emil Bruner in arguing against the possibility of natural theology, Barth insists that God alone is the sole precondition of revelation.<sup>59</sup> God alone can create the bridge to cross the unbridgeable abyss between human and divine. Insofar as humans are affected by sin, no given faculty within humans can directly access the knowledge of God. Thus, the point of contact for revelation should not be anything fixed and constitutive within humans. Instead, it should be opened up dynamically by God. To Barth, this point of contact of revelation is ever a giving event initiated by God.

---

<sup>54</sup> Karl Barth, “No! Answer to Emil Brunner,” in *Natural Theology: Comprising “Nature and Grace” by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply “No!” by Dr. Karl Barth*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946), 67-69.

<sup>55</sup> Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 99.

<sup>56</sup> Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 99. All other claims in this paragraph referring to Barth’s positing on the absolute gulf are taken from this text and page number.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God*, II/1, trans. T. H. L. Parker et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 90.

<sup>58</sup> CD II/1, 91.

<sup>59</sup> Barth, “No! Answer to Emil Brunner,” in *Natural Theology*, 72.

To Barth, God always has exclusive precedence in any moves of the divine-human relationship. Barth insists that theological methodology must reproduce this divine priority because divine-human communication always starts from God's side.<sup>60</sup> Barth's theology is entirely a 'theology from above.' The divine initiative always is the starting point in all the theological topics Barth discusses. To Barth, God temporarily enables access for humans to know what God wants humans to know. Humans can know God only because God wills that humans know God through this process. Revelation thus is an event of grace, which also is a dynamic act of God. It is a miraculously giving initiated by God where humans have no control whatsoever in the process.

Barth insists that God is a mystery to humans, even in revelation. In revelation, God's unknowability<sup>61</sup> is fully revealed. The revealed knowledge itself is paradoxically like concealment<sup>62</sup> to disclose the mystery of God. Barth writes, "We are human, however, and so cannot speak of God... We ought, therefore, to recognize both that we should speak of God and yet cannot, and by that very recognition give God the glory."<sup>63</sup> God is concealed, even in revelation. When humans encounter God, they recognize that God is the wholly other and mysterious Lord. When humans accept the judgment that there is a categorical difference between the creator and creatures, humans' self-idolization dreams are shattered. They realize the unbridgeable abyss between creator and creature, and admit that God is a mystery to them even in the event of revelation.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> CD II/1, 96.

<sup>62</sup> CD II/1, 184.

<sup>63</sup> Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper, 1957), 198.

<sup>64</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, I/1, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 162.

The thesis that God is absolutely free shapes Barth's theological form. According to Barth, humans are mesmerized in the face of the mysterious God.<sup>65</sup> When humans encounter God, the only appropriate responses are humble and submissive. Thus, humans should exalt God throughout theological reflection. As I have explained that the theme of wholly other protects the transcendent identity of God, I will turn to another recurrent theme, the Word of God, to examine how it shapes the interaction between God and humans.

#### **2.2.4 The Word of God**

While Barth insists that revelation is necessary to the knowledge of God, he does not mean revelation in general, but the specific revelation, namely the Word of God. The Word of God is the center of his theology; every doctrine is opened up based upon the Word of God.<sup>66</sup> Stacey Johnson invents a metaphor for Barth's theology, saying, "Barth's theology is a wheel, the Word of God is the center, and from the center, spokes extend in all directions."<sup>67</sup> Barth maintains that theology is the reflection of the Word of God.

Barth insists that only God can make God known; Jesus is the incarnation of the Word of God.<sup>68</sup> Through the second person of the Trinity, God makes God's self known to humans. He refers to the Fourth Gospel, "No one has seen God at any time; God the only Son, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained Him." (John 1:18)<sup>69</sup> Barth insists that the Word of God is God's ultimate revelation, which is in the threefold form: revelation, scripture, and proclamation.<sup>70</sup> They all relate to the God-man Jesus. Jesus himself is the revelation, scripture is his witness, and he is the content of the proclamation. In the logical sequence, first is revelation, then is scripture,

---

<sup>65</sup> CD I/1, 165.

<sup>66</sup> CD I/1, 164.

<sup>67</sup> Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 13.

<sup>68</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 61.

<sup>69</sup> CD I/1, 390.

<sup>70</sup> CD I/1, 88-120

and last is proclamation. However, in experiential sequence, first is proclamation, then is scripture, and last is revelation.

Barth insists that God determines to reveal God's self in concrete human history. The ultimate revelation that occurs in history is Jesus Christ. Humans do not know any abstract information about God. All knowledge of God comes from God's concrete actions in history. To Barth, all abstract speculations lead to idolatry. Humans have to resist the temptation to speculate about God, because speculations cannot measure up to the concrete information revealed in history. According to Barth, theology has to choose concrete over abstract in every theological turn.

For Barth, the Word of God relates the entirety of God to humans. Barth makes a bold assumption: as limited as humans are, human knowledge of God is still valid provided that humans encounter the 'entirety' of God.<sup>71</sup> The Word of God breakthroughs and crosses across the gulf between humans and the divine, then humans can encounter the whole being of God. In the divine revelation, humans encounter God as God is triune in the divine self. They thus encounter the divine essence in its entirety.

According to Barth, the Word of God is the form and material of theology. Barth's theology is Christocentric. Barth insists that Christ is the material of revelation. But for Barth, Christ is also the form of revelation too. The form shapes and constrains the way of revelation.<sup>72</sup> Christ not only teaches humans what God wants to reveal, but he also is the revelation. In other words, how Jesus reveals is as important as what he reveals. As Barth understands that Christology determines both

---

<sup>71</sup> For example, if I can not directly relate to a person, I access her information indirectly and partially. I may easily form distorted idea of the person (it becomes idolatry in the case of faith.) On the contrary, if I can directly relate to a person, the entirety of the person, even I probably do not fully understand her, but I can still uphold that my knowledge of her is true to her, because I encounter her and she directly relates to me.

<sup>72</sup> CD I/1, 190.

the content and method of revelation, the motifs closely tied to Christology, such as personal encounter, concrete in history, reveal in hiddenness, etc., recur in his theology.

For Barth, the encounter with the Word of God means salvation for the one who encounters it.<sup>73</sup> Barth insists that revelation not only offers human ideas about God; it relates humans directly to God.<sup>74</sup> Barth sides with Hegel that there is no uninvolved knowledge of God.<sup>75</sup> Knowledge of God invites humans to participate in God's self-movement of utterance and love.<sup>76</sup> Put differently, Barth insists that humans do not know God *per se*, but humans can only know God *for us*.<sup>77</sup> The Word of God is a direct address from God to a specific person.<sup>78</sup> There is no revelation in general; revelation is a specific act of God in relating to a particular person. In other words, God never addresses humanity in general, but addresses an individual in the moment of revelation.

Barth's theology is often known for its dialectical approach. In encountering of the Word of God, humans are confronted by it. Barth proposes that God's *Yes* must be preceded by God's *No*.<sup>79</sup> American scholar Gary Dorrien comments on Barth's thought, "humans must accept God's judgment before receiving God's grace."<sup>80</sup> The very nature of the divine-human encounter must first be a judgment to humans, because God maintains God's own integrity in the event of the encounter.<sup>81</sup> The integrity of God demands that God is the sole superior; all human achievements are under judgment while encountering God. However, judgment is not the final word from God.<sup>82</sup> God declares judgment to bestow grace.<sup>83</sup> This dialectic of God's *No* before God's *Yes* shapes the

---

<sup>73</sup> CD I/1, 192.

<sup>74</sup> CD I/1, 193.

<sup>75</sup> Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 74-75.

<sup>76</sup> CD I/1, 194.

<sup>77</sup> CD III/1, 51.

<sup>78</sup> CD I/1, 196.

<sup>79</sup> Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*, 68.

<sup>80</sup> Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*, 68.

<sup>81</sup> Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*, 70.

<sup>82</sup> Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*, 71.

<sup>83</sup> Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*, 72.

theology of Barth. Barth says, God always meets us amid our crisis.<sup>84</sup> He argues that the whole message of the gospel declares God's judgment as well as God's salvation. During the encounter of the Word of God, humans experience God's judgment and salvation at the same time. In conclusion, the Word of God accompanies God's salvific power in declaring God's judgment and salvation to humans simultaneously.

Barth's stipulation of the Word of God is a valuable resource for aiding an understanding of the divine calling. Barth's thesis of the Word of God portrays that God works *in* and *for* the world.<sup>85</sup> Scholar Hunsinger sums up Barth's thought, "God's action is objective, personal, historical, salvific, and only carried through Jesus Christ."<sup>86</sup> These features of the Word of God can be meaningful resources to the theory of divine calling. I expound on them in the coming sections.

### **2.3 The Objectivity of Divine Call**

After introducing Barth's theological form, I now adapt his insights to reflect on the notion of the divine calling. As mentioned in the previous section, Barth believes that God is the actual reality. He distastes any subjective trend in theology and defends the objectivity of theology. I will refer to his arguments on the objectivity of the theological enterprise to defend the objectivity of the divine call in the coming section.

Barth takes on the critics of modern philosophy and defends theology as an objective scientific discipline.<sup>87</sup> Can humans describe something objectively meaningful relating to the interaction between God and humans? Is human language capable of stipulating any theory pertaining to the divine? These are pressing questions about the objectivity of theology. I will show

---

<sup>84</sup> Barth to Thurneysen, 11 November 1918, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. James D. Smart (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1964), 45.

<sup>85</sup> CD III/1, 345.

<sup>86</sup> George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: the Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 189.

<sup>87</sup> CD I/1, 276.

through Barth's arguments that the divine call is an objective encounter instead of a subjective feeling.

The idea of objectivity is important here. What does Barth mean by 'objective knowledge' when all knowledge of God can only be through divine revelation? Barth proposes two ideas. First, he insists that the primary knowledge of God is inaccessible to humans.<sup>88</sup> This knowledge belongs to the 'thing-in-itself' category, according to Kant. Second, Barth argues that humans can obtain the secondary knowledge of God, which is the knowledge of revelation.<sup>89</sup> The knowledge of revelation is accessible to humans when God determines to reveal God's self-knowledge in the event of revelation. Barth contends that the knowledge of God that humans can access is still objective despite its mediated nature. In a typical situation, one cannot objectively know another person because the communication conveys only through external means. The communication can be distorted or misinterpreted, so the receiver does not encounter the 'real' person. However, regarding the knowledge of God, God is 'real' presence in the revelation. So God can relate the 'entirety' of God's self in revelation. As a result, the knowledge of God in revelation can be objective. Insofar as the knowledge of God derives from revelation, God guarantees its validity.<sup>90</sup>

Barth painstakingly distinguishes between the self-knowledge of God and the knowledge of God from revelation for two purposes. First, he insists that the knowledge of revelation is 'real,' although it is different from God's self-knowledge. God is a real presence in its representation. Such knowledge is unique, because it is God's self-representation. Second, Barth aims to protect the mystery of God even we claim to have objective knowledge of God. The primary self-knowledge of God is still unknowable to humans, albeit in revelation.

---

<sup>88</sup> CD I/1, 312.

<sup>89</sup> CD I/1, 373.

<sup>90</sup> CD I/1, 382.



I extend Barth's argument on divine call. Insofar as God presents God's self in revelation, the knowledge of revelation is objective. Likewise, when God conveys God's self to humans in the divine call, God is 'real' presence in the divine call. The divine calling is beyond subjective human experience. Humans can have an objective relationship with God because God bestows God's self to humans through the divine call.

### **2.3.1 Realism and Theological Language**

There are two criteria for a theory to be objectively valid. First, the subject matter is real, we have examined Barth's objective view of revelation in the previous section. Second, the language is capable of describing the subject matter. Can human language adequately represent the objective divine reality? The answer lies in the validity of using theological language in the realist manner. I examine Barth's answer in this section.

German theologian Ingolf U. Dalferth points out three conditions that have to meet to make linguistic realism valid.<sup>91</sup> They are present in Barth's theology. First, there is an objective reality independent of subjectivity. Barth holds that God is the ontological reality that is independent of the human mind and social constructions. God is the ultimate reality that is the foundation of all realities. Simply put, God is the foundation of reality.

Second, language can be a viable option to convey the meaning of truth. Language is neither a perfect representation of truth; it can be a fallible medium. Nonetheless, it is reliable enough to be the means of conveying truth. For Barth, theological language is eligible to be used in a realist manner, because revelation is a miraculous act of God to initiate communication with humans. Hence, theological statements are valid access to referents independent of verifiability.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism" in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, Ed. S. W. Sykes (London: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 16.

<sup>92</sup> Dalferth, "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism," 17.

A theological statement could be meaningful insofar as it relates to the 'real' in the revelational event. Barth proposes a sacramental view on the revelational event.<sup>93</sup> When God reveals God's self through human language, God sanctifies the theological statements and makes them a worthy representation of God. It does not mean the theological statement is infallible; rather, it means that theological statements have enough capacity to be a good media to convey the providential theological truth faithfully.

Third, truth is knowable and intelligible.<sup>94</sup> Truth is disclosed in a way that humans could epistemological reconstruct and communicate. Barth devotedly believes that God decides to disclose God's self through the revelation event. Revelation indeed is God's action to make God's self known to humans in history. The self-disclosing action of supreme God guarantees the knowable and intelligible of God's truth for us.

Barth's kerygmatic exposition of revelation also supports the realist tenet on theological statements. Hunsinger points out that kerygma is a personal address, which involves the whole person on the subject matter to be addressed.<sup>95</sup> The revelator directly addresses the recipients of revelation. The content of revelation is direct and personal contrary to universal and general. The whole person is involved in the personal call from the triune God. What the recipients perceived is not infallible, but as it involves the whole person, it is sufficient to convey the entirety of the encounter. Hunsinger also points out, as the revelation is a self-involving address, it assumes a mode of certainty.<sup>96</sup> The certainty allows the recipients to reconstruct the content of revelation in human language.<sup>97</sup> Although the reconstruction is just imperfect human language, it could still be

---

<sup>93</sup> CD, I/1, 330.

<sup>94</sup> Dalferth, "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism," 17.

<sup>95</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 45.

<sup>96</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 46.

<sup>97</sup> According to the realist view of religious language, Barth suggests to interpret the Bible in analogically way. Literalism is impossible because human language in itself does not have the capacity to capture the very self of

objective, because it refers to the concrete address in the personal encounter. In other words, when God presents God's self in communication with humans, human language can transcend beyond its inherited capacity to carry the objective divine content.

### **2.3.2 The Pneumatological Principle of Mediation**

After establishing the possibility that divine reality can be conveyed through human language, the next question is: how can divine objectivity be transported to human subjectivity? In other words, how can divine reality become a human experience? Barth answers this question from the relating act of the triune God. He devises a pneumatological mediating principle to explain it. In this section, I discuss how Barth uses the Spirit's mediation principle to bridge divine objectivity and human subjectivity. The principle is valuable to understanding the event of divine calling. I am indebted to Spanish theologian Philip J. Rosato for many insights in this section.

After Kant separated the noumenal world from the phenomenal, Schleiermacher tried to find a way to reconnect them.<sup>98</sup> For Schleiermacher, human consciousness is the bridge. According to Rosato's interpretation of Schleiermacher, the objective realm can be transported to the subjective through human consciousness; hence the historical entity can become a psychological experience. Human consciousness, thus, becomes the mediator uniting two poles of human existence, namely history and experience.<sup>99</sup>

According to Rosato, Barth was fascinated with Schleiermacher's mediation principle and modified it with the pneumatological twist in order to solve the problem of religious objectivity.<sup>100</sup>

---

God. Moreover, literalism tends to grant privilege to propositional statements focusing on the cognitive aspect of the recipient whereas revelation is a real encounter involving the whole person. Barth refers theological language as analogy. Different from Aquinas, Barth understands that analogy is possible because it is not based upon the innate capacity of being, but the relationship with God. With God-determined relationship, humans can understand God with God-designated analogy. Cf. Dalferth, "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism," 18.

<sup>98</sup> Philip J. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1981), 16.

<sup>99</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 6.

<sup>100</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 11.

Barth thought the formulation of Schleiermacher was incorrect, but his philosophical schema was useful. Barth, therefore, revised Schleiermacher's schema to pneumatology. In order to understand Barth's pneumatological mediation, we need first to understand the role of the Holy Spirit and his formulation of the Trinity.

Barth understands that the Trinity not only depicts the ontology of God, but also reflects God's dealing with the world.<sup>101</sup> Barth joins the economy and immanence of God.<sup>102</sup> He argues that humans cannot know God except through God's acts, and the act of God represents the very being of God.<sup>103</sup> God ever acts according to God's own being. When God acts, God acts with God's whole being; there is no 'extraneous' part of God hidden beyond God's acting. For Barth, the notion of the Trinity represents the movement of God within God's nature. The differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit characterizes the inner movement of the divine life. According to Barth, such threefoldness of God also reflects in the human experience of God in the event of revelation: the Father is revealer; the Son is the revelation; the Spirit is the revealedness.<sup>104</sup> The entire triune God engages God's self to human beings in the threefold event of the revelation. However, the threefoldness of revelation indeed is in unity, as it is only one event; indeed it is *one act* of God or *one God* who acts. As the acting of God reveals the being of God, so in the event of revelation, we know the three-in-one God; we also know a united God in differentiation. In Barth's doctrine of Trinity, he proclaims that the epistemology and ontology of God are one.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> According to Barth, Christian God distinguishes from pagan god or god of natural theology, because Christian God is a triune God. Trinity is the distinctive feature of Christian theology proper. In order to construct a theology that faithfully reflects who God really reveals, Barth employs the Trinitarian pattern throughout his whole theology. The Trinitarian pattern stands out as the pillar of his theological system (CD I/1, 295).

<sup>102</sup> CD I/1, 333.

<sup>103</sup> All content in this paragraph pertaining to Barth's Trinity is taken from CD I/1, 333-347.

<sup>104</sup> CD I/1, 299.

<sup>105</sup> CD II/1, 16.

Barth notes that in the threefold being of God, the trinitarian order is not arbitrary. The three persons of Trinity assume preset roles. The Father is always the originator; the Son is always the object of divine reality to humans; and the Spirit always mediates the divine reality inside humans.<sup>106</sup> The Holy Spirit, therefore, is the actualizer of divine reality on the human side. Christology is important for Barth because it protects the objectivity of divine reality.<sup>107</sup> However, Christology is not an end in itself; it extends to pneumatology in order to make divine reality alive.<sup>108</sup>

Barth maintains that, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, humans can overcome their sinful predicaments to access the divine reality. The Holy Spirit temporarily breaks the divine-human barrier to mediate the objective divine knowledge to humans.<sup>109</sup> In Barth's own words, "How does theology become the human logic of the divine Logos? The answer is that it does not become this at all; rather, theology may find that the Spirit draws near and comes over it, and that theology may then, without resisting, but also without assuming dominion over the Spirit, simply rejoice and obey its power."<sup>110</sup> Thus, the assurance of divine knowledge does not rest upon any human capacity, such as innate human faculty or communal transformation; instead, it rests upon the promise of God through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>111</sup>

According to Rosato, Barth applies the work of the Holy Spirit to Schleiermacher's mediation principle to explain how divine reality comes alive in human subjectivity. Barth replaces consciousness, history, and experience by Holy Spirit, revelation, and faith, respectively.<sup>112</sup> With

---

<sup>106</sup> CD I/1, 384-466.

<sup>107</sup> CD I/1, 4.

<sup>108</sup> Barth., *Evangelical Theology*, 55.

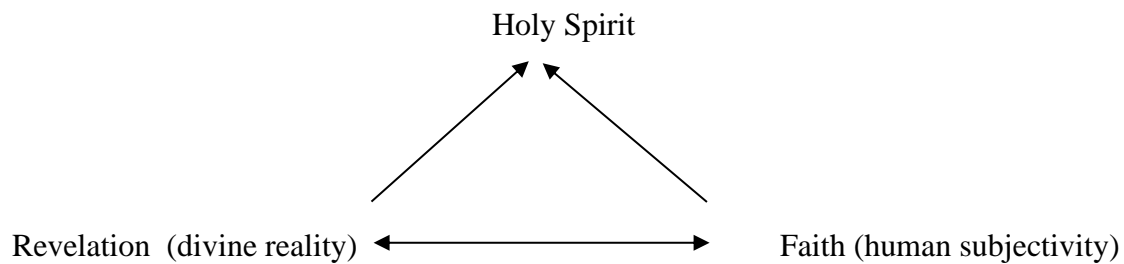
<sup>109</sup> Rosato observes the whole theology of Barth is patterned after a metaphysical-eschatological realism. He points out that Barth understands the Spirit overcomes the eschatological barrier to bring redemption into present age. Cf. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 26.

<sup>110</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 55-6.

<sup>111</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 57.

<sup>112</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 18.

the mediation of the Holy Spirit, human subjectivity and divine reality unite, but these two are still distinguishable.



On the one hand, faith is just a receiving capacity corresponding to revelation; it never exists independently. There is no innate capacity within humans called faith; it is a temporal work of the Holy Spirit in humans in order that they can relate to revelation. Revelation always precedes faith. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit temporarily breaks the barrier of human and divine and joins revelation and faith together in a reciprocal relation. In other words, revelation and faith represent the noetic and ontic pole of truth.<sup>113</sup> Rosato explains, “at the noetic pole there is faith, correspondence, redemption, knowledge; at the ontic pole there is revelation, correspondence, reconciliation, grace. The Spirit mediates between the two because He is the divine Noetic with all the force of the divine Ontic.”<sup>114</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit becomes an activator to bring divine objectivity into human subjectivity.

Christian experience thus becomes part of the divine reality through pneumatological mediation. In Barth’s pneumatological mediation, two striking implications for the Christian experience deserve our attention. First, Christian faith is, as Rosato notes, noetic participation in God’s ontic Truth.<sup>115</sup> Christian experience constitutes and completes God’s revelation. According to Barth, the event of revelation never is complete without the Holy Spirit effecting its reality

---

<sup>113</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 19.

<sup>114</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 42.

<sup>115</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 41.

inside the recipients.<sup>116</sup> Christian experience thus is transformed into a part of divine reality. In other words, the divine reality ever requires human experience as a bearer in revelation.<sup>117</sup> Second, faith depends on the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the sole valid ground of all Christian experience.<sup>118</sup> Consequently, any theology built upon Christian experience apart from the Holy Spirit will degenerate into blurred anthropocentrism.<sup>119</sup> Barth's own words fitly sum up these two implications of Christian experience: "What is the nature of the Word of God? Answer: it is on our lips and in our hearts, in the mystery of the Spirit who is the Lord."<sup>120</sup>

The Holy Spirit, according to Barth, plays a prominent role in relating the divine reality to humans. Barth provides the insightful proposal that Holy Spirit not only communicates contents, but also actualizes the very divine reality within us.<sup>121</sup> I think Barth's pneumatological proposal opens a new perspective on how the divine call can relate to human subjectivity yet retain its independence from that subjectivity.<sup>122</sup>

## **2.4 The Divine Calling Reveals God's Being is in Relating**

Inspired by Barth's insights, I claim that the divine call is God's act to relate to humans, because there is no independent divine knowledge apart from God's acting according to Barth. When the divine call is considered as God's relating act, how does God relate? Does God relate to humans in a specific way? Put differently, is there any fixed pattern in the divine act of relating to humans? Barth's exposition on God's being in acting can help us understand God's acting pattern in the divine call.

---

<sup>116</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 44.

<sup>117</sup> Barth insists that the form and the material of revelation are inseparable. The form is part of the revelation. The event of revelation does not complete without its historical embodiment. (*CD I/1*, 348)

<sup>118</sup> *CD I/2*, 282.

<sup>119</sup> *CD I/2*, 282.

<sup>120</sup> *CD I/1*, 348.

<sup>121</sup> *CD I/1*, 348.

<sup>122</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 42.

### 2.4.1 The Trinitarian Pattern of Relating

Barth understands that God's being is always a being in act.<sup>123</sup> God is alive. The loving relations of God, according to Barth, constitute God's being in and for God's self.<sup>124</sup> Barth suggests that the acting of God in love and freedom constitutes God's self-relationship within the Trinity, and also constitutes all relationships to creation.<sup>125</sup> It is because the being and acting of God are the same.<sup>126</sup>

Barth conceives that God's being consists in the dynamic movement of the Trinity. As God acts according to God's being, the trinitarian pattern is also how God deals with the world. As Johnson observes, the trinitarian pattern exhibits salvation history: the Father is the creator, the Son is the reconciler, and the Spirit is the redeemer.<sup>127</sup> Likewise, humans experience the work of God according to the trinitarian pattern: the Father as the prevenient ground, the Son as the present encounter, the Spirit as the emerging effect.<sup>128</sup> In other words, God predictably relates to humans according to a trinitarian pattern: the Father is the originator, the Son is the objectivity of encounter, and the Spirit is the effect in human subjectivity.<sup>129</sup> As God acts according to the trinitarian pattern, our knowledge of God is imprinted with the trinitarian pattern, Barth points out.<sup>130</sup>

Barth's insight of the trinitarian pattern on God's acting is essential for understanding divine calling. God calls in a way that corresponds to God's nature. This calling is done according to a trinitarian pattern. When the triune God calls humans, they experience that the Father is the source of calling; the Son is the content of the actual call, and the Holy Spirit effectuates the divine

---

<sup>123</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John Webster (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 29.

<sup>124</sup> Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming*, 47.

<sup>125</sup> CD I/1, 30.

<sup>126</sup> CD I/1, 30.

<sup>127</sup> Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 47.

<sup>128</sup> Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 51.

<sup>129</sup> Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 52.

<sup>130</sup> CD I/1, 305.



call within human experience. The three persons have different roles, yet they complete one divine calling. Transposing the general framework into an actual example, we experience the call from God the Father (the source) to follow after the steps of Jesus Christ (the content) in the power of the Holy Spirit (the subjective experience).

#### **2.4.2 The Humanity of God**

When God relates God's triune self to humans in the divine call, a new contact point must be created to obliterate the categorical difference between divine and human. In this section, I show how Barth's doctrine of election sheds light on this new contact point.

Barth states that the doctrine of election is 'the sum of the Gospel.'<sup>131</sup> For Barth, the doctrine of election outlines God's eternal plan for God's self and creation. The doctrine of election speaks of God's "freedom in which He is the One who eternally loves,"<sup>132</sup> and of the power with which God sets the covenant between God's self and the creation.<sup>133</sup> Busch comments, "the covenant with creation seals that God is the one who freely coexists, and the creature is the one who is free to coexistence."<sup>134</sup> In other words, the doctrine of election signifies God's love to make a covenant between God's self and creation.

According to Barth, one cannot understand the doctrine of election apart from the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>135</sup> Barth argues that it is wrong to exegete the doctrine of election "divorced from the name and person to which the whole content of the Bible relates as to the exhaustive self-

---

<sup>131</sup> CD II/2, 159.

<sup>132</sup> CD II/2, 10.

<sup>133</sup> CD II/2, 11.

<sup>134</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 127.

<sup>135</sup> Reformed theologians stipulate God's will of election as decree. Christ and the elective decree are not the same. However, Barth proposes that Christ is the decree: "God's eternal will is the election of Jesus Christ." Cf. David Gibson, "The day of God's mercy: Romans 9-11 in Barth's doctrine of election," in *Engaging with Barth*, Ed. David Gibson and Daniel Stringe (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2008), 136-167.

revelation of God.”<sup>136</sup> In Barth’s Christocentric understanding of election, Jesus Christ must be the electing God as well as the elected man.<sup>137</sup> Barth uses the two-natures one person Chalcedonian definition of Christ to make this claim. Jesus is both God and man, hence in terms of election, Jesus is both the electing God and the elected human. Christ, according to Barth, is both the subject and object of the election.<sup>138</sup>

To Barth, the doctrine of election sets the premise of all human-divine interaction. There is no interaction between God and humans outside Jesus Christ. Barth understands that God comes to humans in the history of Jesus Christ. At the same time, humanity is brought to God in that history.<sup>139</sup> When the second person of Trinity becomes incarnate, the Logos assumes human nature. The Logos objectively incorporates all humanity into himself. Hence, Barth, following Paul, thinks that Jesus Christ is the last Adam,<sup>140</sup> who represents all humanity before God. Whoever believes in him is called a person ‘in Christ.’<sup>141</sup> The phrase ‘in Christ’ sums up the redemptive status of a person.<sup>142</sup>

Furthermore, Christ is the actual interface between God and humans for Barth. As the electing God, Barth insists that Jesus Christ reveals to us that he is God *for humanity*.<sup>143</sup> According to Barth, Jesus is the Word of God who sums up all the divine addresses to humans.<sup>144</sup> He issues personal calls to the individual human, so that individual can respond to him as responding to God.<sup>145</sup> In short, God’s goodwill to humans is presented in the life and message of Jesus. Whoever

---

<sup>136</sup> David Gibson, “The day of God’s mercy: Romans 9-11 in Barth’s doctrine of election,” 140.

<sup>137</sup> CD II/2, 104-105.

<sup>138</sup> CD II/2, 145.

<sup>139</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 37.

<sup>140</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV/1*, e.d. G. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W.Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 512.

<sup>141</sup> CD I/2, 240.

<sup>142</sup> CD II/2, 117.

<sup>143</sup> CD II/2, 7-11.

<sup>144</sup> CD III/2, 150.

<sup>145</sup> CD I/2, 211.

responds to Jesus responds to the electing God. On the other hand, as the elected man, according to Barth, Jesus reveals to creation that he is a man *for God*.<sup>146</sup> Humans are God's covenantal partner for Barth<sup>147</sup> because they are called to stand before God like the elected man Jesus.<sup>148</sup> On the one hand, Jesus was condemned as a sinner to die on the cross.<sup>149</sup> On the other hand, Jesus represents obedient humans to submit unto death.<sup>150</sup>

According to Barth's doctrine of election, humanity is intertwined together with salvation history. God reenacts the whole history of salvation in the divine-man Jesus.<sup>151</sup> Humanity in itself is destined to God's judgment. It is fallen and unfit for the kingdom of God; thus, God says 'no' to humanity. Jesus represents the reprobated who bears the judgment of God.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, Jesus also restores the dignity of humanity. He represents the elected who obeys God and receives God's favor for salvation. Through the man Jesus, God says 'no' and 'yes' to humanity.<sup>153</sup> Hence Jesus is also called the reconciler of the world (2 Cor 5:19).<sup>154</sup> In the light of Jesus, humanity now has a place in the drama of salvation history and Triune God's life.<sup>155</sup> Barth uses a realistic understanding to elaborate on the doctrine of election, because he believes that when a person participates in Jesus's humanity, she inherits a new nature from him.

To sum up, Barth launches the doctrine of election to set up a premise and define the interface between all human and divine interaction. Hence, whatever Barth claims in the doctrine of election, also applies to the divine calling. To Barth, God embraces humanity in God's self. In

---

<sup>146</sup> CD III/2, 203.

<sup>147</sup> CD III/2, 134.

<sup>148</sup> CD III/2, 132.

<sup>149</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, IV/2, e.d. G. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 47-48.

<sup>150</sup> CD III/2, 152.

<sup>151</sup> CD IV/3.1, 10.

<sup>152</sup> CD IV/3.1, 461.

<sup>153</sup> CD IV/3.1, 274.

<sup>154</sup> CD IV/3.1, 209.

<sup>155</sup> CD IV/1, 68.

involving humanity in God's own being, God shows that God is *for* humanity, *with* humanity, and *in* humanity. God is *for* humanity because God sent God's Son for reconciling with humanity. God is *with* humanity because God takes the fate of humanity into the fate of Jesus Christ in salvation history. God is *in* humanity because God's reconciliation work is in human history. Barth's doctrine of election reopens the channel of divine-human communication so that God relates God's self through salvation history. The God-man Jesus is the sole agent of human-divine communication. He is the sole contact point between God and humans. The scripture says, "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)<sup>156</sup> As the relationship between God and humans is determined by salvation history alone according to Barth, I concur and extend that it also predicates the divine calling.

### **2.4.3 The Acting of God as Event in History**

When God establishes the divine-human communication through Jesus Christ, the next question is: where does it occur? Does it happen in the interior spiritual realm of subjectivity, or is it an external affair in history? Barth insightfully points out that it must occur as an affair in history because God acts in an event, as I explain in this section.

According to Barth, God's relating act to humans is an event.<sup>157</sup> This event occurs in history in the nexus of relations.<sup>158</sup> Barth opposes any abstract relationship between God and humans. All 'concrete' or 'real' relations for Barth must be established in the nexus of active relations in history. According to Barth, real relations occur in the time-space continuum.<sup>159</sup> Whatever happens in the time-space continuum, Barth thinks, is not isolated. Instead, it occurs

---

<sup>156</sup> CD IV/3.1, 95.

<sup>157</sup> CD II/1, 51.

<sup>158</sup> CD II/1, 51.

<sup>159</sup> CD II/1, 52.

amid a cluster of events.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, according to Barth, God's acting in events elicit responses in history.<sup>161</sup> Humans, as the creatures in history, encounter the sovereign Lord in history.<sup>162</sup> They also respond in history. In other words, humans respond to God as their Lord in history in the nexus of relations.

To Barth, God's acting in history is always contained in earthly containers. Hunsinger notes that God cannot reveal God's self in the 'naked' form in history because God is absolutely transcendent.<sup>163</sup> Contrary to common understanding, Barth insists that the earthly container is not for the unveiling but for veiling the divine.<sup>164</sup> Insofar as creatures cannot withstand the creator without veiling, the container and revelation are inseparable.<sup>165</sup>

Applying Barth's general human-divine interaction principle to the divine calling, I maintain that God does not convey the call in a vacuum. The divine call conveys the call through earthly vessels, such as Bible, sermon, hymn, etc.<sup>166</sup> The earthly vessel is not equivalent to the divine call; however, we cannot know the divine call without the earthly vessel.<sup>167</sup> Epistemologically, the divine call, to my understanding, is always presented to us by the vessel. However, ontologically, the vessel is not the divine call. The divine call always refers to the reality of God.

For Barth, insofar as God's entire being relates in history, God who acts in history is the same God in aseity and eternity.<sup>168</sup> God's self-identity is preserved in revelation in history.<sup>169</sup> In

---

<sup>160</sup> CD II/1, 52.

<sup>161</sup> CD II/1, 53.

<sup>162</sup> CD II/1, 53.

<sup>163</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 36.

<sup>164</sup> CD 1/1, 314.

<sup>165</sup> CD 1/1, 314.

<sup>166</sup> CD, I/1, 334.

<sup>167</sup> CD, I/1, 334.

<sup>168</sup> CD, II/1, 51-53.

<sup>169</sup> CD, II/1, 51-53.

extension to Barth's line of thought, we are assured that the God who calls us in the time-space continuum is the same God who initiates election in eternity.

## **2.5 The Divine Call Awakes the Search for True Humanity**

I now explain how Barth understands human nature in the light of divine-human relationships. When a person encounters a living God, does she understand herself differently? Yes, according to Barth, the encounter with God will shake her understanding of her true nature. In this section, I show how Barth's proposal of Christocentric anthropology sheds light on understanding the new human nature resulting from the divine-human encounters.

Christology, for Barth, is the epistemological foundation of knowing true human nature. Barth maintains that when we encounter Jesus in revelation, we will properly understand true human nature. Barth argues that humans cannot know their true nature apart from God.<sup>170</sup> Humans are in a sinful state. The sinful state, so Barth who concurs with the Augustinian tradition, obscures and distorts self-understanding. To Barth, Christology raises the question of human self-understanding and resolves it. In light of Christ, we do not only see ourselves as extensions of the natural world; we recognize that we are special because we are in relation to God.<sup>171</sup> Christ reveals the sinful nature of humans and pushes humans to seek the 'real' humanity.<sup>172</sup>

### **2.5.1 The Image of God**

The encounter with Christ prompts humans to search for their true nature. At this point, the question of the image of God emerges. Do humans still possess the divine image? If yes, what is it? This question of the divine image is significant because it helps us apprehend the new self-identity resulting from the divine call.

---

<sup>170</sup> CD II/1, 190.

<sup>171</sup> CD III/2, 17.

<sup>172</sup> CD III/2, 132.

Barth refutes the traditional understanding of the image of God derived from natural theology.<sup>173</sup> The traditional understanding of the divine image is a given fixed constitution within humans, e.g., reason, moral capacity, innate spiritual capacity, etc.<sup>174</sup> Barth argues that humans cannot have a priori assumptions about the image of God. Human beings are sinful.<sup>175</sup> There is no innate capacity in humans that they can claim to be the image of God.<sup>176</sup>

Nevertheless, Barth insists that humans still bear the image of God because they are called before God and reflect God's image. Barth sets forth his *analogia relationis* interpretation to elaborate on the divine image.<sup>177</sup> For Barth, the relation with God fundamentally redefines humans as the bearer of the divine image. Humans stand before God, so they reflect the image of God.<sup>178</sup>

Barth proposes that God relates to humans dynamically, so the image of God is dynamic too.<sup>179</sup> He proposes the dynamic ontology of human nature.<sup>180</sup> Insofar as the core of being is in relations and the relations are always in change, German theologian Eberhard Jüngel rightly says the being is in the becoming or the becoming is the being.<sup>181</sup> The dynamic human ontology describes that the very person in relation *acts* reflects who this person *is*. In other words, acting in relations defines the core of being human. Being human is defined by the relation in action.

In the stipulation of divine call, I claim along Barth's line that humans become true humans because of their response to God's call. They are identified as humans because they are in relation

---

<sup>173</sup> CD III/2, 73.

<sup>174</sup> CD III/2, 21.

<sup>175</sup> CD III/2, 21-23.

<sup>176</sup> CD III/2, 23.

<sup>177</sup> CD I/2, 144-145.

<sup>178</sup> CD III/2, 19.

<sup>179</sup> CD I/1, 29.

<sup>180</sup> Daniel J. Price, *Karl Barth's anthropology in light of modern thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 98.

<sup>181</sup> Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming*, 75-82.

to God. For Barth, humans are creatures who listen to the Word of God.<sup>182</sup> Their relations before God constitute that they are bearers of the divine image.

There are three features of the image of God, according to Barth. First, the image is indefinable.<sup>183</sup> According to Barth, God still is mysterious to humans, even in revelation.<sup>184</sup> God is forever greater than the greatest thought humans could conceive.<sup>185</sup> As the image is a reflection of the mysterious God, so the image of God is also mysterious, indefinable, and unobjectifiable.<sup>186</sup> The image is not a substance with fixed properties; instead, it is a pointer deriving its content directly from God. Second, the image is concrete.<sup>187</sup> Although the image is indefinable, it is not an abstract concept.<sup>188</sup> Barth argues that the image is concrete because it derives its content from the concrete event of revelation and incarnation.<sup>189</sup> As the image of God derives its content from the concrete event of revelation and incarnation, it is not an abstract idea of human speculation; it is thoroughly Christological.<sup>190</sup> Third, the image is universal.<sup>191</sup> Although Barth emphasizes the prevalent impact of sin on human beings, he affirms that God's image is still universal.<sup>192</sup> It is because Jesus Christ is the man who represents humanity. As Christ is the human representative

---

<sup>182</sup> Since Kant's influential book *The critique of practical reason*, many philosophers agree that human beings are thinking, willing, and therefore ethically responsible creatures. They are responsible for an abstract universal law. Kant refutes the materialistic view of humans and argues that real humanhood can only be found in the act using practical reason corresponding to the universal law. Barth agrees with Kant that humanhood is more than physicality. However, Barth disagrees that humanhood is defined by responding to the abstract universal law. Instead, it is defined as responding to the personal call from the man Jesus. Hence, humans derive their humanhood because of Jesus and his call.

<sup>183</sup> CD III/2, 197.

<sup>184</sup> CD III/2, 319.

<sup>185</sup> CD I/1, 244.

<sup>186</sup> CD III/2, 197.

<sup>187</sup> CD III/2, 402.

<sup>188</sup> CD III/2, 403.

<sup>189</sup> CD III/2, 347.

<sup>190</sup> CD III/2, 348.

<sup>191</sup> CD III/2, 555.

<sup>192</sup> CD I/1, 29.



perfectly bearing the image of God, all those who participate in Christ also are the bearers of God's image.<sup>193</sup>

For Barth, restoring the relationship with God implies restoring relationships with fellow human beings.<sup>194</sup> Insofar as humans participate in the new humanity of Jesus, they reflect God's image to live a life both *for God* and *for neighbors*.<sup>195</sup> The image of God is restored in us when we restore our relationship with God and with fellow human beings.

God's image for Barth is the result of the relationship with God, and its content is shown in the life of Jesus who lives *for God* and *for neighbors*. I think this insight transfers very well into our understanding of divine call. As I have previously established that the divine call is beyond content; it relates us to God. In other words, it restores our relationship with God. Hence, it also awakens us to the new life to live for God and for neighbors.

### **2.5.2 I and Thou – Being in Encounter**

According to Barth, humans in the sinful state have broken relations with God and with fellow humans. We have examined that true human nature is nature in relationship. In this section, I examine Barth's theory of personal encounter, which is Barth's proposal to restore broken relationships with God and fellow human beings. The theory of personal encounter will also shed light on how divine call restore humans' relationship with God.

Barth proposes that encounter is always personal. A person can only encounter another individual. She cannot encounter humanity in general.<sup>196</sup> Likewise, for Barth, God's calling is also personal.<sup>197</sup> Hence, God's call is never abstract or universal. God calls individuals. Barth insists

---

<sup>193</sup> CD III/2.134.

<sup>194</sup> CD I/2, 129-30.

<sup>195</sup> CD III/2, 218-219.

<sup>196</sup> CD III/2, 157-158.

<sup>197</sup> CD III/2, 158.

that God does not broadcast messages in general; on the contrary, God personally calls the elected one by one.<sup>198</sup> In other words, God issues direct personal addresses to encounter individuals.

In the personal encounter, relationship is established, and new identity emerges. Barth adapts the theory of ‘I and Thou’ from early twentieth-century Jewish philosopher Martin Buber to elaborate encounter.<sup>199</sup> Barth proposes that personal identity is ‘I and Thou.’ A person has to encounter ‘Thou’ in order to fully recognize her self-identity. In the encounter, Barth claims, actual relation establishes.<sup>200</sup> This actual relation constitutes the core of personal identity. In the relationship, ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ are co-dependent.<sup>201</sup> The ‘Thou’ is inseparable in the constitution of the ‘I.’ ‘I’ is incomprehensible without the ‘Thou.’ In other words, the ‘Thou’ is dynamically immanent in the ‘I’ for Barth.<sup>202</sup> The self-identity of ‘I’ always implicitly refers to the encountering of ‘Thou.’<sup>203</sup> Nonetheless, the ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ do not merge. The ‘Thou’ is always the other to the ‘I.’ They differentiate and distinguish from each other.<sup>204</sup> In plain language, personal encounter constitutes our self-identity, whereas the encounter always implies the tension of confrontation with the other.

I now elaborate on Barth’s encounter theory in the process of divine calling. When God calls an individual, she is confronted by the sovereign Lord as the other. She realizes in the personal encounter that God is not just the Lord in general, but *her* Lord. The encounter elicits demand and response. When she acknowledges the Lord is *her* Lord and submits, a new identity emerges. The Lord becomes a partner of ‘Thou’ to constitute her new ‘I and Thou’ identity. Her new identity

---

<sup>198</sup> CD III/2, 158.

<sup>199</sup> Price, *Karl Barth’s anthropology in light of modern thought*, 138-142.

<sup>200</sup> CD III/2, 245.

<sup>201</sup> CD III/2, 247.

<sup>202</sup> CD III/2, 248.

<sup>203</sup> CD III/2, 249.

<sup>204</sup> CD III/2, 251.

now is the servant-in-relation-to-the-Lord. The personal encounter elicits responses in her and constitutes her personhood in such a way that her relationship with God restores. Barth's encounter theory shows the crucial aspect of how divine call establishes and restores relationships.

## **2.6 The Divine Call is Salvation**

After tracing Barth's essential insights that contribute to the understanding of divine calling, I conclude that the divine call transcends both objective content and subjective experience. It relates the whole person to the triune God. The divine call invites us to participate in the divine life. Hence, it is salvific. Simply put, the divine call is salvation. I now explore the divine calling concerning the significant topics of soteriology in this section.

### **2.6.1 The Dynamic of Christian Life**

Barth understands that salvation begins with God's good will toward a person. It finishes with the corresponding human response. It essentially embraces the entirety of the Christian life. For Barth, the Christian life comprises three significant doctrines: justification, sanctification, and mission. I examine them here in order to work out the idea that the entire Christian life comprises the divine calling.

For Barth, justification is a historical event based on God's eternal determination in election.<sup>205</sup> While election is the blueprint of God's covenant with creations, justification is the beginning of the concrete calling for humans. God starts to have a relationship with a person from justification. Thus, it is the beginning of the Christian life.<sup>206</sup> Barth writes, "the justification of man is the establishment of his right, the introduction of the life of a new man who is righteous before God."<sup>207</sup> The righteousness of God means "God's negating and overcoming and taking

---

<sup>205</sup> CD IV/I, 519.

<sup>206</sup> CD IV/I, 519.

<sup>207</sup> CD IV/I, 619.

away and destroying wrong and man as the doer of it.”<sup>208</sup> In short, Barth considers that justification is the objective works of Christ where humans have no contribution. Through the justification, humans’ wrongs are canceled so that humans can be reconciled with God. In other words, justification is a concrete implementation of God’s election so that humans can stand before God once again.

Barth proposes that sanctification is the salvific result of the work of Christ, which is the end that fulfills God’s calling. Barth claims that sanctification can be achieved only in the eschaton.<sup>209</sup> It is another aspect of salvation which similar to justification, depends entirely on the objective work of Christ.<sup>210</sup> Barth draws a connection between justification and sanctification. He thinks that justification is the making of the relationship between humans and God right.<sup>211</sup> Sanctification is the eschatological goal that sinful humans will be totally delivered from sin.<sup>212</sup> It is eschatological because we cannot achieve it in the present life. We also cannot achieve it by our own efforts. It depends on Christ who finishes this work in the eschaton. Hunsinger points out that Barth’s theological form of objectivism was skillfully crafted in his exposition on both justification and sanctification.<sup>213</sup> Barth upholds that justification and sanctification are the resultant work of Christ.

---

<sup>208</sup> CD IV/2, 597.

<sup>209</sup> CD IV/II, 499-511.

<sup>210</sup> Barth’s understanding of sanctification is different from John Calvin. In Calvin’s theology, justification is the objective result of salvation, whereas sanctification is the subjective progress of salvation.

<sup>211</sup> CD IV/II, 501.

<sup>212</sup> CD IV/II, 501.

<sup>213</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 150.

Divine calling is missional. For Barth, Christians are called to carry out God's mission into the world.<sup>214</sup> Barth argues that the process of salvation is for giving glory to God.<sup>215</sup> Christian should not see salvation as a matter of personal advancement to secure her personal salvation. Barth refutes the popular notion of 'being saved' and links the notion to the mentality of egoism. Thus, the Christian life should focus on mission. The mission is a duty God entrusted to Christians.<sup>216</sup> Barth's doctrine of mission introduces subjective participation in the Christian experience. Christians fulfill God's calling in the process of witnessing to God.<sup>217</sup> They transform from ego-centric lives to Christ center lives through the power of the Spirit in witnessing.<sup>218</sup> Barth emphasizes that Christians are sent into the world to witness both the sovereignty and the love of God.<sup>219</sup> As Christ is sent to witness the Father, Christians are sent to witness Christ.<sup>220</sup> Thus, we should attend to the missional overtone in divine calling.

## **2.6.2 Downplay of Subjective Experience**

Subjective experience should not be the focus of faith, according to Barth. How does Barth elucidate the subjective experience in the divine calling? For Barth, experience does not matter. Human experience may vary, but God as objective reality can still be present and real.<sup>221</sup> Barth boldly claims that, "Our being in Christ is hidden in such a way that it can never be perceived by

---

<sup>214</sup> Barth understands that mission is God's salvific plan to the persons God has elected. He interprets Paul's Letter to the Romans chapters 9 to 11, the famous biblical passage on election, through the vocational lens. The issue in Romans chapter 9 to 11 for Barth is not whether Israel or individual Israelites are saved or doomed. The matter at hand is that God's mission was given to Israel as the elected community, and they failed. As a result, the divine calling is given to the elected man Jesus. God's calling on humans was first represents in Isreal, but then it transferred to Jesus, and finally passed to the church. The issue at heart is that the new elected people, church, take up where Israelites failed, and restart the mission. Thus, mission is essential to the elected people.

<sup>215</sup> CD IV/III.2, 681.

<sup>216</sup> CD IV/III.2, 682.

<sup>217</sup> CD IV/III.2, 554.

<sup>218</sup> CD IV/III.2, 554.

<sup>219</sup> CD IV/III.2, 555.

<sup>220</sup> CD IV/III.2, 555.

<sup>221</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 117.

looking to our experience in the life of faith, for what we see by looking at such experience is the opposite of our being in Christ.”<sup>222</sup> The life of faith is not driven by subjective experience. According to Barth, personal experience is irrelevant to the divine call.<sup>223</sup> Humans are elected and called in Christ, which is the foundation and focal point of faith. Experience does not confirm nor nullify the call from God.

Although Barth says the subjective experience is irrelevant, he still thinks there is a genuine subjective experience in Christian life. Christian subjective experience mediates through Holy Spirit (section 3.2). Nonetheless, Barth downplays the role of experience because he thinks experience should not be the priority in faith. Instead, action and mission should be the drive of the Christian life. Christian experience will come after participation in Christ’s mission. Thus, according to Barth, any teaching that focuses Christian life on experience is dangerous and harmful. He thinks such teaching misunderstands the very essence of the life of faith. The essence of the life of faith must focus on Christ and Christ alone.<sup>224</sup> Thus, Barth rejects all kinds of mysticism. According to Barth, mysticism diverts the focus of faith from Christ’s objective works to human subjectivity.<sup>225</sup> Such diversion is nothing but human-made religion; it is thus unbelief.<sup>226</sup> To sum up, according to Barth, subjective human experience is irrelevant to the divine call. On the contrary, the divine call is an objective reality achieved in Christ and focused on Christ alone.

### **2.6.3 Freedom in Divine Calling**

Do humans have genuine freedom, provided God is sovereign and free in everything dealing with humans, including divine call? Does divine freedom cancel human freedom? Is it possible that

---

<sup>222</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 123.

<sup>223</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 150-151.

<sup>224</sup> CD II/1, 152.

<sup>225</sup> CD II/1, 152.

<sup>226</sup> CD I/2, 297-298.

human freedom is just a shadow property existing merely because of the actual existence of divine freedom? These are legitimate questions when we follow Barth's emphasis on divine sovereignty. I explore Barth's answer on human freedom in the following section.

Barth adopted the Chalcedonian formula to defend the coexistence of divine and human agency.<sup>227</sup> Once again, Barth uses Christology to solve the theological problem in his system. Hunsinger points out that Barth uses the Chalcedonian pattern as a template to stipulate in all divine and human interactions.<sup>228</sup> The Chalcedonian formula upholds that Christ is "in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the natures being in no way removed because of the union, but rather the properties of each nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and one Hypostasis."<sup>229</sup> The two natures coexist, coinhere without any confusion or mixture. They maintain their integrity without transforming one into the other. To Barth, the Chalcedonian formula illustrated that the divine and human agencies are a seamless unity, yet each maintains its unique nature without any blur of identity.<sup>230</sup> According to Barth, the two natures in Christ exist and coexist harmoniously without any hint of monism.<sup>231</sup> The priority of coexisting is fixed, and the way of cooperation is patterned.<sup>232</sup> Barth writes, "It is God who absolutely precedes and humanity which can only follow. Even as sovereign acts and words of God, as his free acts of rule, judgment, salvation, and revelation, these events are also human actions and passions, works and experience, and *vice versa*."<sup>233</sup> Barth uses the

---

<sup>227</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 186.

<sup>228</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 186.

<sup>229</sup> "The Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon" *Nicene and Post-Nicene Father*, Philip Schaff ed. (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1885), XIV.

<sup>230</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 185-186.

<sup>231</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 187.

<sup>232</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 188.

<sup>233</sup> CD IV/3, 63.

Christological analogy to point out how the individual integrity of two agents is preserved in the divine-human interaction.<sup>234</sup>

Barth understands divine calling is a mystery and miracle followed the primary mystery and miracle of the incarnation. Barth writes, “The mystery of vocation, of the fact that there takes place this calling of human beings within human time and history, is very great. In its own manner and place it is no less than the Christmas mystery of the birth of the eternal Word of God in the flesh in which it has its primary basis. And the miracle which denotes this mystery, i.e., the miracle of calling, of its possibility, of the way which God takes with human beings when he causes their calling to take place, is also great. In its own manner and place it is no less than the Christmas miracle of the birth of Jesus Christ of the Virgin Mary in which it has its pattern.”<sup>235</sup> Divine calling is a mystery; thus, we cannot fully comprehend or explain it in human terms.<sup>236</sup> It is a miracle because it is impossible without the divine gift.<sup>237</sup> Barth continues, “God knows what he wills in the vocation of the human person, and that this cannot be hidden for a moment from the person who is called. We are concerned with a lofty event, yet not with one that is without meaning or purpose, but one which is controlled by an intrinsically clear *ratio*, like the primary event of Christmas.”<sup>238</sup> In short, although the event of divine calling is a mystery and miracle according to Barth, it still encompasses intrinsic meaning and purpose to the one being called.

## 2.7 Conclusion

I have examined how Barth’s theology is a valuable contribution to a theology of divine calling. Barth’s theology of revelation portrays how the triune self of sovereign God relates to humans in

---

<sup>234</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 189.

<sup>235</sup> CD IV/3, 520.

<sup>236</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 191.

<sup>237</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 195.

<sup>238</sup> CD IV/3, 520.



personal encounters. Consequently, humans are saved and restored to true humanity. The following paragraphs will recapture some essential features of how Barth can help articulate a theological foundation of divine calling.

I have elaborated Barth's objective understanding of revelation and propose that the divine calling is an objective reality that mediates through the Holy Spirit. Humans in the sinful state cannot know God, but God shows God's goodwill by calling humans to have a relationship with God's self. I propose that the divine call is God's invitation for the relationship. Moreover, the relation with God is objectively real, and it mediates through the Holy Spirit.

I extend Barth's trinitarian theology and propose that the entire triune God relates to humans in the event of divine calling. The triune God always relates in a fixed pattern: Father as the initiator of the call, Son is the content of the call, the Holy Spirit mediates the experience of the call. According to this pattern, we experience the divine call as to be called by the Father, to follow after the steps of Jesus Christ, and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

I adapt Barth's doctrine of election and propose that Jesus Christ is the premise and the interface of the divine call. When we participate in the divine call, we participate in the salvation history of Jesus Christ. We live our lives as Jesus who lived *for God* and *for neighbors*.

I have explained Barth's theory of personal encounter and maintain that divine call is also an encounter. Divine call awakens us to realize that we are sinful and need to restore our relationship with God and fellow human beings. The divine call also elicits our response and bestows us a new identity in Christ.

I propose that the divine call is salvific. Divine calling transcends beyond objective content and subjective experience. It relates our whole being to God. The salvific goal of the divine call is

participation in God's mission. When we participate in the vocation of witnessing God, we fulfill the divine call.

After establishing the theological foundation of divine calling from Barth's revelation theology, I turn to philosopher A. N. Whitehead in the next chapter. A. N. Whitehead's philosophy can shed light on the mechanism of the divine calling.

## **Chapter 3 - The Mechanism of Divine Calling: A. N. Whitehead's Insights on Divine Calling**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the theory of divine calling, the interaction between God and humans is a crucial part. How God relates to the world, in broad terms, is an indispensable part of constructing the theology of divine calling. I have explicated the insights of divine calling in terms of the framework of revelation in the previous chapter. The theology of Karl Barth shows us the way of divine-human interaction shaped by divine sovereignty. The theology of revelation can serve as the theological foundation to outline how the triune God relates to humans through the salvation history. In this chapter, I elaborate on the possible mechanism of divine calling contributed by Whitehead's process philosophy.

Whitehead is one of the most original thinkers of the twentieth century. His insights of process philosophy can contribute to understanding God and world interaction in general, and God and human interaction in particular. Although Whitehead was interested in cosmology and the nature of reality, he did not leave any detailed writing on anthropology. Needless to say, Whitehead did not have a specific proposal on divine calling. It is understandable because neither spirituality nor theological anthropology was his primary concern. However, Whitehead did have a unique idea about God and the world. We can still sketch the Whiteheadian divine-human interaction with respect to Whitehead's thought. The strength of Whitehead's philosophy is its emphasis on the mechanism of God and human interaction in metaphysical terms. Insofar as the divine calling concerns the interaction between God and humans, Whitehead's process philosophy offers a unique perspective to understand how God's persuasion mechanism, embedded in the metaphysical structure of every existence, functions in humans and feedback to God.

In this chapter, I first introduce Whitehead's thought by laying out Whitehead's philosophical form - namely, why Whitehead began his quest for metaphysics and the problem he intended to solve. Then, I elaborate on the key topics of process philosophy that can be valuable to constructing the divine calling theory. These are the dipolar nature of God, initial aim, human personhood, and subjectivity. These topics are important because they shed new light to see God, humans, and the world. They also show the interplay between God and the world. With Whitehead's insights, we can understand the mechanism of how divine call operates.

### **3.2 Whitehead's Metaphysics and Its Form**

Whitehead was born in England in 1861. He devoted his life to questing for a viable theoretical framework for the discovery of reality. His academic career started as a mathematician, then turned into a metaphysician. The process philosophy is the product of his life work. I explicate the form of his philosophy in the following section.

#### **3.2.1 The Agenda of Whitehead's Philosophy**

Whitehead showed interest in the philosophy of science early while he was still a mathematician. In *An Introduction to Mathematics*, he wrote the following in the opening chapter, "The object of the following chapters is not to teach mathematics, but to enable students from the very beginning of their course to know what the science is about, and why it is necessarily the foundation of exact thought as applied to natural phenomena,"<sup>239</sup> Whitehead showed interest in theories on the foundation of science early in his career, and such interest permeated his entire academic career.

Whitehead was interested in seeking the scientific model to represent reality. When Whitehead immersed himself more in the philosophical theories of science, he grew more and

---

<sup>239</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *An Introduction to Mathematics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 8.

more dissatisfied. Whitehead understood that science was an empirical discipline; however, he thought science's empirical scope was too narrow. He realized that science limited itself to only one segment of reality, namely the material segment. The goal of science is to construe theories gathered from empirical data. However, when science operates under the assumption where only material data counts, it works on a faulty foundation. Whitehead believed that immaterial data are also indispensable parts of the whole of reality.<sup>240</sup> He argued that experiences could be valuable data to unlock the mystery of reality. Although experiences (e.g. religious, artistic experience, for example) cannot be categorized in the material realm, they are also sensible data. They can produce noticeable value in scientific exploration. Whitehead believed that reality could be acutely represented only when a metaphysical system could adequately embrace all thought forms, insights, and all modes of experience.<sup>241</sup>

Whitehead realized Descartes's epistemology was problematic for knowing reality. In the eighteenth century, David Hume criticized inductive reasoning and argued that there is no proof to back up the link between cause and effect. The relationship between cause and effect is made up in the mind. It is just a habit of thinking. Whitehead agreed with Hume as long as philosophy follows Descartes's epistemology.<sup>242</sup> Hume's criticism of inductive reasoning is sound because the subjective mind is isolated in the body; it cannot directly access objects.<sup>243</sup> According to Descartes, the isolated subjective mind is solely responsible for knowledge construction, and it can only receive external data from unreliable sensual media. In that case, the inductive knowledge is prone to fault. Whitehead perceived that epistemology was on shaky ground as long as the subject

---

<sup>240</sup> David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 23.

<sup>241</sup> Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 23.

<sup>242</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, corrected ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne ed. (New York: Free Press, 1978), 49. All subsequent references to this text are cited as PR.

<sup>243</sup> PR 50.

could not directly access objects.<sup>244</sup> Hence, Whitehead was motivated to devise a new schema of understanding that could directly connect the subject and object.

Whitehead also noticed that the classical philosophical model is problematic for representing reality in a nontemporal fashion.<sup>245</sup> Time is a crucial factor in understanding reality after Einstein's relativity theory. If we merely render reality as a static, frozen moment of the present, we cannot adequately account for the motion from past to future. We will miss the essential element of reality. The temporal aspect has to be included in metaphysics in order to understand the flow of reality.

Moreover, Whitehead wanted to resolve the dilemma between the subjective and objective epistemological models. Whitehead noticed that philosophers were divided on adopting either the subjectivist or objectivist principles in understanding reality.<sup>246</sup> Generally speaking, idealists adopt the subjectivist principle. They try to understand reality starting from their subjective speculation. Descartes and Kant are the standout representatives. Conversely, empiricists adopt the objectivist principle. Scientists are prime examples of empiricists. They try to induce theory from empirical data. Whitehead saw that neither principle is sufficient to understand reality. He traced the cause of the division between subjectivist and objectivist principles, and concluded that it is due to the classical metaphysical model.<sup>247</sup> He understood that the division could not be bridged until a new

---

<sup>244</sup> PR 50.

<sup>245</sup> PR 73.

<sup>246</sup> PR 158.

<sup>247</sup> Starting from classical Greek philosophy, Greek philosophers started to understand reality from common experience and the common forms of language. (PR 158) In common experience, the subject perceives a stone and formulates the statement 'the stone is grey.' Starting from the common statement and generalizing it to philosophy, classical philosophy formulates that reality is composed of a substance and qualities attached to it. The stone is composed of a fixed substance, 'stone,' and then various qualities, for example, grey and hard, attach to it. Along this line of thinking, there are two classes of reality, namely universal and particular. The universal is quality that applies to various substances. Grey is a universal quality. The stone is a particular because it is an instantiation of various universal qualities.

Apart from the distinction between universal and particular, Whitehead also pointed out that the classical epistemology assumes two classes of reality, namely the knower and the things to be known. The whole enterprise

metaphysics emerged. Hence, he wanted to create a metaphysical model that could better capture the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity.

Because of the above dissatisfactions, Whitehead was motivated to construct a new metaphysics. He believed that a new metaphysics could provide a better foundation for science to understand reality. Whitehead, therefore, changed from a mathematician to a metaphysician in the latter part of his academic career.

### **3.2.2 From Epistemology to Ontology**

Whitehead thought that the Cartesian philosophy had many pitfalls, and thus he constructed a new philosophy system from the ground up. His metaphysics is very different from Cartesian

---

of epistemology is assumed upon the separation between the knower and the things to be known. The knower can only know the world through the perceptions of sensation experiences. However, what the perceiver perceives is not the thing-in-itself; she only perceives sensational datum mediating through universal qualities. E.g. the experience of the stone belongs to the perceiving subject, rather than the perceived object. The perceiving person constructs the content of the object experienced from the universal qualities. Such constructed experience is private, abstract, and devoid of the content of the object itself. According to Whitehead, the disjunction of the perceiving subject and the perceived object is the root cause of epistemological predicaments in philosophy. (PR 152) He believed that Descartes's division of reality into the *res extensa* and *res cogitans* is disastrous. The subject exists in a solitary state. Then she also becomes a prisoner of herself because she cannot actually contact the outside world. Whitehead called this assumption of knowledge subjectivist bias. (PR 160)

The subjectivist principle affirms that the human subject perceives experiences and analyzes the perceived datum in the term of the universals. Whitehead said, "the subjectivist principle is, that the datum in the act of experience can be adequately analyzed purely in terms of universals." (PR 160) In constructing the knowledge of objects through universals, the subjectivist principle has to think in substance-quality categories. The substance is the subject enjoying all immediate experiences. Each substance is the subject of itself. We can only know the substance by the perception of the qualities attached to it. One subject cannot know another subject by the immediate experience because all subjects exist in solitary by themselves. Thus, the subject is the center and source of knowledge. Hence, epistemology goes in the direction of hopeless subjectivism, which pays the price of forsaking the objective world.

Knowing the pitfalls of subjectivism, some philosophers like Locke tried to propose another epistemological principle to counter-balance, that is, the sensationalist or objectivist principle. The sensationalist principle tries to affirm the possibility of knowledge derived from the objective world. The sensationalist principle argues that the subject does not provide any fixed framework to shape the experiences derived from the datum. Instead, the subject is like a blank sheet that merely receives experiences passively from the objective world. Whitehead summarized, "the sensationalist principle is, that the primary activity in the act of experience is the bare subjective entertainment of the datum, devoid of any subjective form of reception." (PR 160) According to Whitehead, western philosophy was dangled around subjectivist and sensationalist principles in understanding reality. (PR 157)

philosophy. It will be beneficial to survey Whitehead's metaphysics in order to crystalize his insights into the theology of calling.

Whitehead did not construct his metaphysics by pure speculation. His ontology is derived from epistemology. He believed that human experience is the clue to understanding what reality is. A new subjective theory must explicate the emergence of subjectivity that could be balanced by objectivity.

Whitehead refuted the objectivist principle because experiences do not emerge floating around; instead, they are all connected and organized around the perceiving subject.<sup>248</sup> Our experience of the world is *our* experience. We actively select and shape the data of perception. Our subjectivity is actively involved in the constitution of knowledge. Whitehead pointed out that even John Locke, the forceful proponent of the sensationalist principle, also inconsistently adopted the subjectivist principle.<sup>249</sup>

Whitehead agreed that the subjectivist principle is a good starting point for understanding reality. He praised the discovery of subjectivist principle to be "the greatest philosophical discovery since the age of Plato and Aristotle."<sup>250</sup> Nevertheless, the subjectivist principle also led modern epistemology into a dead-end of subjectivism. Whitehead noticed that the subjectivist principle isolates the subject from the outside objective world; thus, the objective contents can no longer participate in the constitution of knowledge.<sup>251</sup>

Furthermore, Whitehead pointed out that subjectivists wrongly set up a binary structure to understand reality as subject/object, substance/attributes, universal/particular.<sup>252</sup> Whitehead

---

<sup>248</sup> PR 138.

<sup>249</sup> PR 159.

<sup>250</sup> PR 159.

<sup>251</sup> PR 132.

<sup>252</sup> PR 40.



noticed that in our common-sense experience, we experience something, because *we* experience something and also we experience *something*.<sup>253</sup> In immediate experience, the subject does not separate from the object. We experience how the objective world impresses its objectivity into our subjectivity.<sup>254</sup> On the one hand, the subject is the center of organizing and framing our experiences. On the other hand, common sense does not doubt that experience is derived from real objects. In the erroneous pair up of opposites subject and object, the subjectivist principle overlooks the unity of reality and knowledge. When the unity of subject and object is disjoined, an imbalanced binary structure emerges; one pole of the opposite will be privileged over the other. Subjects are privileged over objects; substances are privileged over properties. Whitehead wrote, “Descartes’ discovery on the side of subjectivism requires balancing by an ‘objectivist’ principle as to the datum for experience.”<sup>255</sup> He concluded that the subjectivist principle must be balanced by objectivity because the subjective experience is the imprint of objective data. Whitehead’s insights on the reformed subjectivist principle can help us to join subject and object, caller and being called. We will explore this connection in further detail in the later sections on divine calling.

### **3.2.3 Reality as Events**

Whitehead formulated a metaphysical system that could get around the binary structure and unify subjective and objective worlds. He was aware of the weaknesses of both subjectivist and objectivist principles. He wanted to maintain the ‘unity of experience’ between subjectivity and objectivity. On the one hand, Whitehead agreed with subjectivists that the common subjective experience is a clue to understanding reality.<sup>256</sup> However, from his philosophical analysis of common experience, Whitehead recognized that the experience is never isolated. It is a flux of

---

<sup>253</sup> PR 40.

<sup>254</sup> PR 158.

<sup>255</sup> PR 160.

<sup>256</sup> PR 160.

network.<sup>257</sup> Moreover, it evolves continuously. Recognizing the flowing nature of experience, Whitehead believed that reality is not still; it is a dynamic moving nexus. As reality is continuous in transition, positions of subject and object are interchangeable. Hence, the bifurcation between subject and object is healed. Roland Faber aptly sums it up, “Whitehead’s unique solution to the problem of the bifurcation of reality is to understand reality not as a given, but as a ‘moving whole’ that *constitutes* itself within a perpetual creative transition from multiplicity to unity.”<sup>258</sup>

Whitehead proposed that the fundament of reality is an event instead of substance.<sup>259</sup> There is no fixed static substance behind actualities. Nevertheless, events constitute concrete existences. Whitehead also calls event ‘concrecence’ or ‘actual occasion.’<sup>260</sup> What is an event? In a nutshell, an event is a process of becoming.<sup>261</sup> The concrete realities are composed of a consecutive series of becoming processes.<sup>262</sup> Whitehead invented the term concrecence, which means becoming concrete, to denote the process of becoming.<sup>263</sup> According to Whitehead, every concrecence consists of three phases, namely, the phase of collection, integration, and satisfaction. The initial phase is the collective phase, which receives ‘data’ from the past and other entities. It prehends all experiences from the objective world. This phase collects the ‘raw materials’ for the second phase.<sup>264</sup> Then, ‘raw materials’ become ‘available options’ to the integrative phase, so to speak. The integrative phase selects, values, integrates all prehended ‘data,’ and decides the outcomes. The subject emerges resulted from the experience of subjectivity in the moment of decision. Each

---

<sup>257</sup> PR 85.

<sup>258</sup> Roland Faber, *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 23.

<sup>259</sup> PR 73.

<sup>260</sup> PR 41-42.

<sup>261</sup> PR 73.

<sup>262</sup> PR 35.

<sup>263</sup> PR 41-42.

<sup>264</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance: An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 76.

process will choose its evolving path to maximize its satisfaction. Once the outcome and decision emerge, the concurring process enters the satisfaction phase. In the satisfaction phase, the subject of the concurring process ends and becomes an object. It will be prehended as an object by another new emerging concurring process. In other words, each process perishes after the satisfaction phase, and it will become the 'dead materials' for another emerging process.

### **3.2.4 The Features of Whitehead's Philosophical Form**

I think it is beneficial to outline the major features of Whitehead's metaphysics before discussing the specific topics. Following are the rudiments to shape Whitehead's philosophical form.

First, Whitehead was very concerned about interrelatedness.<sup>265</sup> Whitehead insisted that the world is composed of interrelations.<sup>266</sup> Whitehead believed that classical Newtonian physics was wrong because it portrayed underlying reality from isolated atomic units.<sup>267</sup> Newtonian atomic cores are unchangeable and unrelated to other counterparts. It inaccurately depicts reality. In contrast to Newtonian physics, Whitehead observed that reality is composed of an intricate network.<sup>268</sup> One part always affects the other parts. If there are essentials in the make-up of things, the essentials must be interrelated rather than isolated.

Second, Whitehead observed that everything in the universe undergoes a state of change.<sup>269</sup> Change instead of motionlessness should be the fundamental principle in understanding the reality of the universe. Whitehead believed that to understand reality accurately, a metaphysical model must account for the mechanisms of change.<sup>270</sup> Hence, process philosophy painstakingly

---

<sup>265</sup> PR 208.

<sup>266</sup> PR 208.

<sup>267</sup> PR 85.

<sup>268</sup> PR 85.

<sup>269</sup> PR 210.

<sup>270</sup> PR 210.

formulates the mechanism in the occasions of change. It also shows how the change of one occasion depends on other occasions.

Third, Whitehead construed a metaphysical model that could portray the relationship between past, present, and future. The traditional Newtonian model construed reality as a static present; the model cannot adequately describe the passage of time.<sup>271</sup> The classical model depicts reality as a static snapshot of a picture. There is no account of the past and its relation to the present. It also lacks movement into the future. On the contrary, process philosophy emphasizes the temporal aspect of change smoothly from the past to the present and into the future.

Fourth, Whitehead believed experience is the primary component of reality.<sup>272</sup> There is subjectivity in every occasion, even below the subconscious level. Experience does not depend on consciousness. Hence, the human being is not the only agent who is capable of experience. Whitehead believed that all existences contain subjectivity. The complexity of existence determines the degrees of subjectivity. The more complicated form of existence, the higher degree of subjectivity emerges. When an organism achieves a high degree of subjectivity, it can experience a greater variety of experiences. It can also become more self-determined. Human beings are a superb example of a highly intricate form of existence. The high level of subjectivity in humans allows them to develop self-consciousness. They can also have a high degree of determination. On the contrary, the lowest form of existence, for example, an electron, also has its lower level of subjectivity, though its self-determination is very limited.

Fifth, Whitehead observed that creativity and freedom play an essential role in the progress of the world.<sup>273</sup> The Newtonian metaphysic model is faulty because it portrays reality from a mere

---

<sup>271</sup> PR 208.

<sup>272</sup> PR 220.

<sup>273</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1933), 43.

mechanic and deterministic perspective. It inadequately accounts for freedom and creativity. On the contrary, process philosophy proposes that processes are self-initiated units.<sup>274</sup> Every occasion has its own subjectivity and experience. Occasions are capable of determining their path of evolving. In Whitehead's terms, they choose in the process of concreting. Freedom and creativity are innate drives to push the evolution of the world.<sup>275</sup>

Sixth, Whitehead upheld that the metaphysical system must be comprehensive. Metaphysics, as a conceptual construal of reality, must embrace ALL empirical data. The pitfall of scientific materialism is its exclusion of empirical experience beyond sensation and the material realm.<sup>276</sup> For Whitehead, any metaphysic assuming an atheistic, materialistic worldview is in error. Such a faulty metaphysical model ignores a large segment of empirical data as long as it does not fit into its assumptions.<sup>277</sup> Thus, the valid metaphysical model comprises all aspects of empirical experiences, including God and other nonsensational experiences.

Seventh, Whitehead believed that the underlying structure of reality is consistent. Whitehead's metaphysics is consistent in portraying how the universe operates. From God to the world, from a complicated organism to a single moment of experience, all inherit the same underlying principles and structures. Whitehead aimed to construct a model that could accommodate the unitextuality of reality without falling into undifferentiated monism.<sup>278</sup>

### **3.3 Divine Calling and The Theory of God**

God is a logical necessity in Whitehead's metaphysics system. The critical role of God in Whitehead's metaphysics is comparable to the unmoved mover in Aristotle. God is the ultimate

---

<sup>274</sup> PR 86.

<sup>275</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 48.

<sup>276</sup> Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 23.

<sup>277</sup> PR 7.

<sup>278</sup> Roland Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 25.

ontological principle that completes Whitehead's metaphysical scheme.<sup>279</sup> Whitehead developed his theory of God in different phases of his thinking. In his early work *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead claimed that God does not have divine subjectivity.<sup>280</sup> God is simply a principle of limitation for the world's concrescing.<sup>281</sup> Hence, God does not have apparent personal involvement in the world; God only provides God's vision, principles, values, eternal objects to the world. The world evolves by itself, and cannot affect God.<sup>282</sup> Thus God is a nontemporal and complete entity in Whitehead's early writing.<sup>283</sup>

As Whitehead further developed his theory of God, he realized that if God can affect the world processes during their concrescing, God must also be a concrete process.<sup>284</sup> In other words, God is not just a principle for world processes, God also exists as a process along with those world processes. Furthermore, God is immensely involved in the world and participates in every world process. God, in Whitehead's mature thought, is the supreme entity of interrelatedness.<sup>285</sup> My project on divine calling will adopt Whitehead's mature theory of God to explore the God-world interaction in the divine calling.

Although God is an indispensable element in Whitehead's philosophy, his concept of God is confusing. Most Whitehead scholars agree that his theory of God is inconsistent and incomplete.<sup>286</sup> The editor of *Process and Reality*, David Griffin, once said that the incoherence in

---

<sup>279</sup> PR 342.

<sup>280</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 153.

<sup>281</sup> Roland Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 24.

<sup>282</sup> Whitehead, *Religion in Making*, 153.

<sup>283</sup> Whitehead, *Religion in Making*, 94.

<sup>284</sup> Roland Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 24.

<sup>285</sup> PR 347.

<sup>286</sup> Franklin I. Gamwell, "An Incoherence in Process and Reality," *Process Studies* Vol. 49, No. 1 (Spring-Summer 2020), pp. 5-35

*Process and Reality* is unacceptable. If it were his student dissertation, he would reject it because of its high level of incoherence.<sup>287</sup>

Generally speaking, there are two major approaches to interpreting God according to process philosophy. The first approach is to interpret God as a single actual entity. It was Whitehead's original idea. God is ever concreting and taking up all the processes of the world into Godself. Marjorie Suchocki, Lewis S. Ford, William A. Christian, to name a few, are representatives of this group. However, there is a major issue in this interpretation. When God takes up all the world process into God's self to become a single entity, does God's concreting process ever become complete? The world process is always evolving. There is always more to come. How can the worldprehend the 'incomplete' God if God's concreting process is ever-evolving and never complete? A concreting process only becomes an object when it is complete; until then, the other process cannotprehend it. According to Whitehead, only an objective process can be perceived.<sup>288</sup> When the process is still in becoming, other processes cannotprehend it. Whitehead noticed this issue<sup>289</sup> but did not provide any solution.<sup>290</sup>

---

<sup>287</sup> David Griffin told his students in his class "Process theology and Whitehead" in Claremont Graduate University.

<sup>288</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1984), 9.

<sup>289</sup> Whitehead, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics*, 9.

<sup>290</sup> Many later process thinkers tried to propose different theories to solve the problem when God as a single actual entity. For example, Marjorie Suchocki proposed that the concreting process of God is a reversal of worldly process. Cf. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1995) Worldly process concretes starting from the mental pole and ends in the physical pole. Conversely, God's process starts from the physical pole and ends in the mental pole. Hence, God and the world meet in the crosspath. Lewis S. Ford proposed that God is in the realm of the future. Ford argued that the future is the locus of creativity and possibilities stored in God. God is still incomprehensible from the world. However, God unifies all the world's objects and lures the world to concrete through the future options. In other words, God still can interact with the world, even though the world cannot directlyprehend God. c.f. Lewis Ford, *Transforming Process Theism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000).

The second approach is to interpret God as a society. Charles Hartshorne<sup>291</sup> and John B. Cobb, Jr.<sup>292</sup> are representatives of this interpretation. They proposed that God is the collection of entities that extend through time. God is composed of a succession of concrescences.<sup>293</sup> According to this theory, God's interaction with the world is no different from other entities. God's immediate present occasions will pass and become 'past.' The past occasion of God is an object. The world canprehend God's past occasions like all other objects. Hartshorne believes that such modification of Whitehead's theory is necessary. Otherwise, the concept of God will be the most incoherent issue in the process philosophical system.<sup>294</sup>

The theories of God in process philosophies are a complicated subject. It is beyond this dissertation's scope to explore, even though it might produce stimulating discussions. I will adhere to Whitehead's original proposal to interpret God as a single entity. This interpretation of God retains Whitehead's original vision and provides valuable insights for my project on divine calling.

### **3.3.1 Dipolar Nature of God**

When Whitehead fathomed the way of God and the world interact, he formulated the dipolar nature of God. Whitehead proposed that God contains two poles. On the one hand, there is God's transcendent nature so that God can be the 'foundation' of all temporal actual entities. It is the mental pole of God, which is atemporal and eternal. God's eternal pole provides the goals, inspirations, possibilities for every occasion in the world. On the other hand, Whitehead also

---

<sup>291</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1948).

<sup>292</sup> John B. Cobb Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The Westminster Press, 1965).

<sup>293</sup> Hartshorne's modification is not without its drawback. When God is a society, God's relationship to the world is a many-to-many relationship. The world does not directly interact with the present God, but the past occasions of God. The present occasion of God relates to the world as well as the Godself past occasions. The Whitehead's original scheme of God-world interaction has to make a substantial modification. The theory of dipolar nature needs to be revised too because God as an entity interacts with the world would be very different from as a society. In a nutshell, Hartshorne's modification is to rewrite a large section of Whitehead's theory of God from the ground up. Whitehead's original insights on God could hardly be recognizable after the change.

<sup>294</sup> Ford, *Transforming Process Theism*, 41-65.



proposed that God is affected by the world.<sup>295</sup> God has actual relations involving the world; God also changes along with the world. Whitehead called it the physical pole of God because it receives ‘data’ from the world. This pole is temporal, ever-evolving, and it always interacts with the world. Whitehead called it the everlasting pole of God. This pole absorbs and embraces the world into God’s very own nature. In other words, through the physical pole, God accepts the world and transforms it into God’s self.

When Whitehead further developed his model of God, he referred to the mental pole as God’s primordial nature and the physical pole as the consequent nature.<sup>296</sup> On the one hand, Whitehead suggested that the primordial nature represents God’s transcendent and giving nature. On the other hand, he suggested that the consequent nature depicts God’s evolving and receiving nature.<sup>297</sup> Whitehead insisted that God’s relation to the world is both giving and receiving. God is both transcendent and immanently involved with the world at the same time. He used the term ‘dipolar’ to denote these two sides of God.<sup>298</sup>

I now apply Whitehead’s dipolar model to construct my theory of divine calling. The relationship between God, the caller, and the human, the being called, is, for Whitehead, bilateral. God is both giving and receiving when God calls the world. On the giving side, God’s primordial nature offers a goal and aim for worldly occasions. Put differently, humans receive guidance, direction, motivation, and empowerment from God’s transcendental provision. In addition to giving, God also receives in the calling activity. God’s consequent nature absorbs worldly occasions into Godself. God feels satisfactory because of the absorption. God connects to the called person, and embraces her into God’s life. When God opens up God’s self in calling humans,

---

<sup>295</sup> PR 345.

<sup>296</sup> PR 244.

<sup>297</sup> PR 31.

<sup>298</sup> PR 345.

God receives the person in God's own life. God allows God's self to change in the process. Thus, God evolves by incorporating the person's goal into God's self. In conclusion, the dipolar nature of God provides a metaphysical framework for understanding how the giving and receiving relationship between God and humans, which can illuminate the theory of divine calling.

### **3.3.2 The Primordial Nature**

God must be the source of novelty for the world. Whitehead apprehended that there is novelty in the world. In order that novelty can occur, there must be an ultimate basis to account for potentialities.<sup>299</sup> For Whitehead, every concrescing process prehends past occasions, integrates them with the subjective decision, and forms a new actual occasion. There should be new possibilities and objects to input into the concrescing process so that novelty is possible. Suppose there were no new objects or possibilities to feed into the concrescing process. In that case, the concrescing process could only choose to unify data from past occasions; as a result, the outcome of concrescence could only be the repetition of the past. Hence, novelty would be impossible. Whitehead wrote, "apart from the intervention of God, there could be nothing new in the world, and no order in the world. The course of creation would be a dead level of ineffectiveness, with all balance and intensity progressively excluded by the cross currents of incompatibility."<sup>300</sup> However, as novelty exists, new potentialities and possibilities have to exist somewhere and are prehensible. For Whitehead, those potentialities and possibilities should be 'stored' in an actual agent, in order that they can be prehended and contributed in actual concrescences.<sup>301</sup> Thus, Whitehead fathomed and proposed that a supreme agent, namely God, should be the source to provide all the world's potentialities.<sup>302</sup>

---

<sup>299</sup> PR 31.

<sup>300</sup> PR 247.

<sup>301</sup> PR 46.

<sup>302</sup> PR 31.

As Whitehead developed his metaphysics further, he proposed that God's primordial nature is where the potentialities and possibilities are accounted for.<sup>303</sup> Owing to the immanent diversities in the world, the possibilities and potentialities are stored in God's primordial nature.<sup>304</sup> They must contain unlimited diversity. Whitehead proposed that God's primordial nature includes "the entire multiplicity of eternal objects."<sup>305</sup> It is the reservoir of all possibilities and potentialities. Those potentialities and possibilities are ingressed into every concreting process in the world so that unlimited novelty can be introduced to the concreting process.<sup>306</sup> Whitehead wrote, "by reason of the actuality of this primordial valuation of pure potentials, each eternal object has a definite, effective relevance to each concreting process."<sup>307</sup> In other words, God's primordial nature contributes to the essentials of novelty so that novelty can happen in the concreting process.

As the primordial nature is the foundation of novelty according to Whitehead, I infer that the divine caller calls in a non-repetitive way. God accesses the distinctiveness of every occasion and directs God's call distinctively. God employs the divine calling to expand human horizons so that they can reach their higher potentials.

Moreover, God's values guide the world. Whitehead recognized that order, beauty, and goodness exist in the world. These qualities cannot exist by sheer probability. Because if every possibility is equally possible, no priority or selective principle could be enacted. Chance would become the only principle taking over on all the concreting processes.<sup>308</sup> Thus, randomness would become the sure pattern of all concreting processes. On the contrary, the world displays order, beauty, and goodness. These qualities can only be developed by valued guidance. The

---

<sup>303</sup> PR 46.

<sup>304</sup> PR 46.

<sup>305</sup> PR 40.

<sup>306</sup> PR 257.

<sup>307</sup> PR 40.

<sup>308</sup> Whitehead, *Religion in Making*, 101.

universe exhibits certain categorial conditions.<sup>309</sup> There are restrictions and conditions placed upon the universe to evolve in preference of certain values. So an actual entity has a basis to justify that certain values are better than others. For example, one can intuitively affirm that beauty is better than ugliness; harmony is better than chaos. Value is possible because there is a restriction to establish criteria for contrasts, oppositions, and gradations. Whitehead said, “restriction is the price of value,”<sup>310</sup> and God’s primordial nature is the metaphysical foundation to establish order and restrictions. Whitehead, therefore, argued that God’s primordial nature not only provides possibilities, but those possibilities contain values and priorities.<sup>311</sup> They are the grounds of order and value in the world. In Whitehead’s own words, “It is the conceptual adjustment of all appetites in the form of aversions and adversions. It constitutes the meaning of relevance. Its status as an actual efficient fact is recognized by terming it the ‘primordial nature of God.’”<sup>312</sup> Simply put, the primordial nature of God is the foundation to provide values and orders in the world.

As the primordial nature of God is the basis of values and orders according to Whitehead, I conclude that God provides the criteria to judge values in the world. Applying Whitehead’s insights into divine calling, I suggest that the divine caller is the source of beauty and values. God conveys God’s judgment to creatures through divine calling. On the one hand, God’s calling inspires humans to pursue divine-approved values and condemns evil values on the other.

Whitehead further proposed that the world processes evolve towards their final goals guided by God’s primordial nature.<sup>313</sup> Each concrescent process evolves in order to maximize the satisfaction of their own appetites. Their appetites, however, are shaped according to God’s

---

<sup>309</sup> PR 18-30.

<sup>310</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 256.

<sup>311</sup> Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 256.

<sup>312</sup> PR 32.

<sup>313</sup> PR 347.

provided values and orders. Hence, the world does not move blindly without purpose or direction. On the contrary, it strives towards its own divine-inspired goal. Put poetically, God's primordial nature is God's vision to the world. God's vision is the blueprint to define the goal in every process. The processes of the world congregate in order to fulfill their goals.

As the primordial nature of God provides the divinely inspired appetite to the world, the world, according to Whitehead, will get its satisfaction when the world fulfills God's vision. Likewise, I infer that humans will obtain maximum satisfaction when they fulfill God's calling within them. When a person follows the divine call, she embraces her true potentials and grows according to the divine-approved course. Thus, she lives a fulfilling life.

Whitehead's idea of the primordial nature has two implications as I claim for the divine calling. First, the world cannot exist apart from God. God is the very foundation of all actual occasions. God provides the vision to the world. The world is lured to the direction of intensifying beauty and order corresponding to God's calling. In other words, God participates intrinsically in every process of the world. God calls the world so that the world is lured to fulfill its greatest potential. Second, I infer that the world as a whole reflects God's primordial preference. God's primordial vision conveys its preference through the initial aim of every worldly process. While the existing world is the product of all processes, it reflects the sum of God's preference in every individual process. Whitehead, therefore, figuratively said, "the world lives by its incarnation of God in itself."<sup>314</sup> In Whitehead's framework, I see the world effectually fulfills the call of God.

### **3.3.3 Initial Aim**

As a metaphysician, Whitehead wanted to explicate the mechanism of how God conveys God's vision to the worldly process. Thus, he invented the concept of the initial aim. As the initial aim is

---

<sup>314</sup> Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 149.

the key to understanding how God's vision communicates to the world, it is also crucial to understand the theory of divine calling.

For Whitehead, every concreting process is a self-initiated process.<sup>315</sup> God is not 'out there' to control the world with remote sovereign power. God also does not delegate God's power to natural law for governing the world. Instead, God is immanent in every process of the world. God's immanent presence in the world conveys God's primordial vision of beauty and order.<sup>316</sup> When Whitehead emphasized the self-initiated nature in every concreting process, he formulated the idea of 'initial aim.'<sup>317</sup> Whitehead's initial aim proposal can help us to solve two essential issues on divine calling. First, how can God communicate God's vision to creatures?<sup>318</sup> Second, where does the origin of subjectivity come from in the self-determined concreting processes?<sup>319</sup>

God communicates God's evaluations through the initial aim for Whitehead. What is the basis for the concreting process to choose among various possibilities? Whitehead answers that God's primordial nature values all the potentialities.<sup>320</sup> In the initial stage of concreting, the initial aim plays the role of directing the 'appetite' of the concreting process.<sup>321</sup> God uses the initial aim to lure the world to strive towards God's vision of order, beauty, and goodness.<sup>322</sup> God is not just 'out there' inspiring the world. God is immanent in each concreting experience of the world. God effectively communicates God's vision through the initial aim. In Whitehead's own words, "the concrescence is directed by the subjective aim, that the subjective forms of the feelings shall be such as to constitute the eternal objects into relevant lures of feeling severally appropriate

---

<sup>315</sup> PR 86.

<sup>316</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 265.

<sup>317</sup> PR 105.

<sup>318</sup> PR 284.

<sup>319</sup> PR 284.

<sup>320</sup> PR 236-238.

<sup>321</sup> PR 239.

<sup>322</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 252.

for all realizable basic conditions.”<sup>323</sup> In other words, the actual entity prehends the initial aim from the primordial nature of God; the concreting process is lured by this initial aim to progress into its destination.

For Whitehead, the initial aim also plays a crucial role in the origin of sustaining subjectivity. All concreting processes involve subjectivity. Subjectivity for Whitehead is the foundation for the concreting process to choose among various possibilities to achieve its final cause. Each concrescence unifies the immediate past and the physical prehensions, decides, and finally attains completion in satisfaction.<sup>324</sup> As each concreting process perishes when it completes, subjectivity arises in the process and ends with it. Then how could a sustaining subjectivity exist? Is there any guiding force in the concreting process to maintain the continuous subjectivity in the subsequent concrescence? Whitehead believed it is.<sup>325</sup> On every new occasion, the entity actualizes its subjectivity through prehending the initial aim. The initial aim from God is the guiding reference for such subjective realization. Although each moment of subjectivity perishes when a concreting process completes, a ‘living’ subjectivity still exists across time towards the future goal. This subjectivity could not be originated solely from the objective ‘dead’ past. It exists in God and maintains its continuity through the initial aim. Hosinski rightly points out, “the ‘living’ subjective present cannot originate from the ‘dead’ objectivity past. The past object world, though necessary as the ground upon which present subjectivity ‘stand,’ offers no reason for the living immediacy of the present moment.”<sup>326</sup> The initial aim acts as a ‘carrier’ to carry the subjectivity of the past to the present moment.

---

<sup>323</sup> PR 87-88.

<sup>324</sup> PR 232-233.

<sup>325</sup> PR 224.

<sup>326</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 159.

Then one would ask, how does the initial aim know what to ‘carry’ to the present moment? Is there any guiding principle or factor to direct the initial aim? Again, God’s primordial nature comes into place according to Whitehead. The primordial nature of God is the transcendental reference to provide the continuity carrying in the initial aim. Without a transcendental foundation as the reference in the initial aim, it is not easy to justify subjectivity continuity. According to Whitehead, each concreting process prehends the initial aim directly from the primordial nature of God, through which subjectivity emerges to guide the process of concreting. God’s primordial nature provides the foundation so that living immediacy of subjective aim can be experienced in every present moment. When God provides the initial aim, it is the guiding force of subjectivity. As a result, the universe can promote the emergence of ever more intense forms of subjective experience.<sup>327</sup>

I perceive that Whitehead’s idea of initial aim explains how God’s calling can be actualized. For Whitehead, the initial aim becomes the medium to communicate God’s vision within humans. In other words, the initial aim is the actual divine call. It communicates not through external means but intrinsic persuasion. Moreover, it becomes the foundation of human subjectivity. In other words, humans are beings defined by divine calls. Humans can experience consistent subjectivity because the divine call is consistent. It also presents the options before humans so that humans can experience the freedom to choose.

### **3.3.4 Consequent Nature**

Whitehead proposed that God not only inspires God’s vision through primordial nature. God is also influenced by and becoming with the world. The consequent nature of God portrays how God reciprocally relates and is changed with the world. Insights from Whitehead’s theory of consequent

---

<sup>327</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 168.



nature can help understand how the divine caller actually ‘dances with’ humans. For Whitehead, God is not only an abstract ontological ground; God is also an actual entity relating to the world. Figuratively speaking, the divine caller is not a passive observer but a dancing partner with the world, at least according to the way that I invoke the term dance to conceptualize this.

The consequent nature for Whitehead is God’s self-actualization from the world. Whitehead wrote, “the consequent nature of God is the realization of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom. The primordial nature is conceptual, the consequent nature is the weaving of God’s physical feelings upon his primordial concepts.”<sup>328</sup> Whitehead insisted that God is not an unmovable mover. Instead, God never ceases to evolve. God also fulfills God’s destiny by evolving together with the world.<sup>329</sup> The path of God’s becoming depends upon the relation with the world. In God’s consequent nature, God feels all the temporal occasions. God derives God’s physical prehensions from feeling the world. Whitehead understood that God has an eternal vision of the world. God’s vision of the world is composed of possible values. Such possible values could not be concretized without the world. God obtains satisfaction when the world concretizes God’s vision.

Moreover, God includes the world into God’s self, so that God shares the experience of the world according to Whitehead. God not only feels the temporal entities of the world; God also incorporates them into the process of God’s becoming.<sup>330</sup> Every worldly process has temporal and spatial limitations. The actual occasion only receives limited related objects into itself for its concreting. On the contrary, God does not have temporal and spatial limitations. God incorporates ALL occasions of the world into God’s concreting.<sup>331</sup> The world becomes part of

---

<sup>328</sup> PR 345.

<sup>329</sup> PR 345.

<sup>330</sup> PR 346.

<sup>331</sup> PR 346.

God when the world is incorporated into God.<sup>332</sup> In other words, God's destiny collides with the world's destiny. The process of the world becoming part of God's becoming. Therefore, for Whitehead, God can feel the world's most in-depth experiences because the world experience becomes God's experience.<sup>333</sup> The experiences of the world contribute to the consequent nature of God in becoming.

#### **3.3.4.1 The Consequent Nature and the World**

There are two essential characteristics of God-world relations corresponding to God's consequent nature, which redefine our understanding of God. First, God is not self-sufficient. God cannot actualize God's self without the world.<sup>334</sup> God is finite in the sense that God cannot complete God's own actualization without the world according to Whitehead. God is limited and determined by the world processes. God depends upon the world because God actualizes God's self by prehending and unifying every worldly actual entity. Second, God finds enjoyment through concurring with the world.<sup>335</sup> The world is an essential ingredient for God's actualization. God can only obtain maximum enjoyment by means of God's own actualization, which depends upon the world.

When I transpose the consequent nature concept to divine calling, I infer that the divine caller interdepends on the being called. The divine caller is not a supreme unmoved caller. Instead, God also receives humans into God's life through calling. God also changes, corresponding to the responses from humans. God's satisfaction depends upon how humans respond to the calling. Thus, the divine call links the 'fates' of the divine caller and being called together. Their paths intertwist together to fulfill their destinies. The divine caller is inseparable from the being called. The

---

<sup>332</sup> PR 346.

<sup>333</sup> PR 345.

<sup>334</sup> PR 347.

<sup>335</sup> PR 349.

fulfillment of the call satisfies both humans and God as well. Moreover, the response from the call defines the caller's becoming. The divine caller is not omnipotent in aseity. Thus, calling is not an external affair on acting. The whole being of God involves in calling, which affects God's being in becoming.

Second, Whitehead articulated that God's knowledge of the world is not observer knowledge;<sup>336</sup> instead it is participant knowledge. For Whitehead, when God embraces and prehends the feeling of the world, God feels the world from inside. God is conscious of all the possibilities as well as the value judgment behind all decisions. God not only knows all choices but also knows from the inside why the specific choices are chosen. According to Whitehead, God feels and suffers all the experiences of temporal occasions with the world. In extending Whitehead's line of thinking, I suggest God sympathizes with humans in the calling. God suffers together with humans when human responds to the divine calling negatively. Conversely, God grows together with humans when they positively respond to the divine calling.

#### **3.3.4.2 Consequent Nature and Salvation**

I elaborate in this section that the divine calling is salvific relation. One of the essential insights from Karl Barth is that he insisted that the revelation of God is salvation. As I examined in the previous chapter on how God calls through revelation, the act of calling is, as I argue, salvific. Likewise, after establishing the link between Whiteheadian God-world interaction and divine calling, I notice that Whitehead also proposed that integrating the world facts into God's consequent nature is salvific.

Salvation is achieved by incorporation into God's self for Whitehead. While the primordial nature contributes to the world, the consequent nature receives the world. When God incorporates

---

<sup>336</sup> PR 110.

the world processes into God's self, God suffers with the world in the first hands.<sup>337</sup> God suffers when God prehends the evil in the world in contrast with the good that might happen. Although the world processes may deviate from God's vision of good and beauty, God saves the world by unifying the world processes into God's self. The world processes may be chaotic and fall short of their full potentials, but God's immeasurable love still incorporates them into God's life.<sup>338</sup> When God incorporates the world processes within God's self, God harmonizes and 're-orders' them according to God's ideal vision.<sup>339</sup> They become part of God. Every temporal occasion, therefore, is transformed into an 'everlasting' element in God's experience.<sup>340</sup> When the world processes are incorporated into God, the ultimate Good, they are saved within God. Their purposes and meanings may not be explicit when there are struggles in world processes. They may also deviate from their destinies. However, the world's ultimate meaning and purposes emerge when all the world's processes become perfectly harmonious within God according to God's primordial vision. Whitehead called this God's salvation to the world.<sup>341</sup> When the actualized world processes unite in God, the world processes are saved by being parts of God.

Whitehead's proposal of salvation through unification into God could be a valuable insight to understand divine calling. As I have elaborated in the previous sections that God calls through initial aim, humans may rebel against the divine call, because God does not call coercively. Humans can fall short of their purposes and not rise to their full potential. However, following the line with Whitehead's thinking, I affirm the divine calling never fails. God can always redeem disharmony raised from rebellion. God still fully embraces the consequences of falling from God's

---

<sup>337</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 196.

<sup>338</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 196.

<sup>339</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 195.

<sup>340</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 195.

<sup>341</sup> PR 345.

calling. I further affirm when humans are entirely accepted by God even though they fail, they will find new meaning and harmony again in God.<sup>342</sup> The idea of final integration with God guarantees that God's calling is effectual. God will redeem all processes eventually in God's self according to God's vision so that all the processes will fulfill their callings either in the world or ultimately in God.

### **3.3.5 The Principle of Creativity and God-World Relation**

When Whitehead insisted that God is codependent with the world, the classical theological issue of "God is compulsory in creation" emerges. The classical theological issue is as follows: if God can only obtain maximum enjoyment by creating and coexisting with the world, so God is compulsory to create. If God does not create this world, God needs to create another world. God has no choice but to create. Thus, the urge of creation, the principle of creativity, acts as a "god above God." Creativity becomes the ultimate ontological principle that even God and the world have to obey.<sup>343</sup>

It is essential to clarify two concepts to understand whether creativity is an ultimate reality of ruling over God. First, what does Whitehead mean when he termed God as the creator of the world? Second, what is creativity in relation to God? God does not create the world according to the traditional sense in Whiteheadian thought for the former question. The world is not created purely by an external force, Whitehead argued. Instead, the world has the power of creativity to evolve and create itself.<sup>344</sup> However, God still plays an essential part in the self-creation process of the world. According to Whitehead, God provides all the necessary conditions and limitations in order that an actual occasion could occur.<sup>345</sup> In other words, the world creates itself regarding

---

<sup>342</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 203.

<sup>343</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 209.

<sup>344</sup> PR 209.

<sup>345</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 104.

God's providence on all the necessary conditions. In this sense, God is the creator. Simply put, God makes creation happen. God is the necessary condition of creation. There can be no creation without God's provision.

Corresponding to the second question, Whitehead insisted that we should not understand creativity in an extrinsic way. Creativity is not an external law that governs realities.<sup>346</sup> On the contrary, creativity is an intrinsic dynamic urge within all actual entities.<sup>347</sup> It is the drive of the self-creating process. Every existing reality has the urge to express its creativity according to Whitehead. Hence, there is no such external "god above God" rule to force God to create. God creates not because of the compulsory law from outside, but from the internal urge to express God's self. Whitehead, therefore, can say that God is the outcome of creativity<sup>348</sup> insofar as God creates God's self in the process of becoming from the urges of creativity.

In light of Whitehead's understanding of creation, I propose to see the God and human relationship in a new way. God is not compulsive to have a relationship with humans. As God expresses God's creativity to create, so God expresses God's love to have a relationship with humans. God is not forced by an external principle to call humans. The urge to call humans is God's intrinsic expression of love. Moreover, God provides all the necessary conditions so that humans can respond to God's calling. Thus God calls humans to become God's partner because of God's love.

### **3.4 Humans and Divine Calling**

Whitehead did not explicitly formulate anthropology in his philosophy. However, Whitehead's idea of person and society can help us understand humans in terms of his ontological structure. I

---

<sup>346</sup> PR 214.

<sup>347</sup> PR 214.

<sup>348</sup> PR 88.

explicate Whitehead's view of humans and transpose his insights to understand the divine calling in this section.

### **3.4.1 Pan-expericism**

For Whitehead, modern science is incomplete because it excludes a wide range of non-material experiences. Whitehead redefined experience as the basis of all reality. Whitehead argued that reality is more than materials; subjectivity also precedes consciousness.<sup>349</sup> For many classical philosophers, such as Descartes and Kant, consciousness is a unique feature of being humans. Human beings are the apex of evolution. They have developed a complicated system of brain and mind so that subjectivity is possible. Hence subjectivity is an outcome emerging from consciousness. However, Whitehead argued the other way round. He understood that experience is the basic building block of reality.<sup>350</sup> He extended the observation of human subjectivity and experience to all realities. Whitehead insisted that subjectivity exists at all levels, even at the most primitive atomic level.<sup>351</sup> The event of concrescence consists of subjectivity. Subjectivity exists to decide its own 'fate' in the later phase of concrescence.<sup>352</sup> According to Whitehead, the universe is a massive system of interconnected experiences. To understand the true nature of reality, we cannot perceive the universe as insolated 'dead' matters but analyze the universe as a 'living' connected experience.

Whitehead's pan-expericism can help us to avoid anthropocentric hubris in heeding the divine call. We no longer see the world as a 'dead' machine, and we stand in the center. On the contrary, we now see the world as a connected living organic whole, and we are part of it.

---

<sup>349</sup> PR 160.

<sup>350</sup> PR 49.

<sup>351</sup> PR 50.

<sup>352</sup> PR 160.

Whitehead's perspective suggests an important purpose of heeding the divine call. We need to heed divine calling because it helps us pursue God's vision in harmony with all other creations.

### 3.4.2 Person and Society

According to Whitehead, the basic unit of reality is an event. An event is formed by a strand of single occasions succeeding each other.<sup>353</sup> Events can group together to form a society. Society is a cluster of events.<sup>354</sup> Organisms are societies.<sup>355</sup> Obviously, there are various levels of complexity in organisms. The more complex an organism becomes, for Whitehead, the more coordination between the events within the organism. The highly complicated organisms are societies with a high level of harmony and coordination between the events.<sup>356</sup> Subjective intensity also develops along with the level of complexity in society.<sup>357</sup> When the complexity increases, subjectivity also becomes more intense. When subjectivity develops to a high level, consciousness emerges.<sup>358</sup> Generally speaking, low-level events also have a primitive form of subjectivity, according to Whitehead. When the organism becomes more complex, the subjectivity becomes more intensive, and the consciousness becomes more acute. In a highly developed organism, e.g., humans, decisions can be consciously made because human subjectivity is intensely developed.<sup>359</sup>

According to Whitehead, personhood is relatedness. The relationship with others constitutes who a person is.<sup>360</sup> Personal self-identity for Whitehead is when a highly complex organism develops unity between the past event and the entire present society.<sup>361</sup> A personal being

---

<sup>353</sup> PR 208

<sup>354</sup> PR 89.

<sup>355</sup> PR 89.

<sup>356</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Facdt and Creative Advance*, 128.

<sup>357</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Facdt and Creative Advance*, 130.

<sup>358</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Facdt and Creative Advance*, 130.

<sup>359</sup> PR 90.

<sup>360</sup> PR 92.

<sup>361</sup> PR 90.



is a complex organism in nexus that can consciously experience, be guided by its own creativity, and strive towards its self intensifying goal. The living nexus does not develop an anterior character or substantive form. Instead, the events develop themselves in mutual immanence to form a living nexus.<sup>362</sup> Each event experiences all other events in the nexus and integrates them into its own concrescence. Thus, the personal identity for Whitehead is developed by cumulative shaping and solidifying its 'style' and 'pattern.'<sup>363</sup> The process of solidifying 'style' is not through establishing structure or internal principle. Instead, it is developed through the cumulative process of intensifying subjectivity. When the nexus of events are mutually related to each other and unifies themselves in decision and integration, the unified subjectivity emerges, and personal identity develops.<sup>364</sup>

Whitehead's ontological structure offers us an intriguing insight to see personhood. It can enrich our understanding of divine calling. According to Whitehead, there is no internal principle or established structure to define personhood. Personal identification is just solidified pattern or style in relation to the surrounding.<sup>365</sup>

In light of Whitehead's personhood theory, I propose that God calls no individual, because God does not call humans specifically. God shares the initial aim to every concrescing process. There is no innate structure or faculty inside humans, which makes humans distinctly called by God. However, as personhood develops through cumulative habit, when a person develops the habit to 'listen' to God, she becomes an acute listener to God's calling. In other words, when a person develops the habitual positive response to God's calling/vision according to the initial aim,

---

<sup>362</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 105.

<sup>363</sup> PR 104.

<sup>364</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 106.

<sup>365</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 102.

she lives in tune with God's call. Furthermore, personhood is developed through relatedness. When a person develops the habit of relating to God, she inherits an identity as a person-called-by-God.

### 3.4.3 New Perspective on Subjectivity

Whitehead's metaphysics offers a new perspective to understand the perceiving subject without isolating her from the perceived object. There is no dichotomy of subject and object. The subject and object are interwoven. The subject becomes the object, and the object also constitutes the subject.<sup>366</sup>

Whitehead pointed out that both the present sensational experiences and the past occasions also contribute to the process of concrescence in the name of causal efficacy.<sup>367</sup> How to relate to the data from the past is a challenge in classical metaphysics. Classical metaphysics considers present sensational perceptions are the only data that a subject can perceive. Past occasions do not account for subjective experiences. Contrasting with the limited scope of classical theory, Whitehead's proposal encompasses the full range of experiences, including past and present, for the emergence of subjectivity.

While classical theory maintains that the subject precedes objective experiences, the subject exists in itself, and objective experiences are properties subjugated by the subject; Whitehead, on the contrary, insisted that the subjectivity is the outcome emerging from prehending and integrating the objective experiences.<sup>368</sup> A subject does not antecedent her experiences.<sup>369</sup> Objective experiences exist first, and the subject is an outcome because of the emergent

---

<sup>366</sup> PR 24.

<sup>367</sup> PR 24.

<sup>368</sup> PR 104.

<sup>369</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 95.

subjectivity arising from the prehension of experience, integration, and satisfaction. In other words, the subject cannot exist alone. It depends on other objects.<sup>370</sup>

Moreover, the subjective identity is not maintained by the existence of fixed substance; it emerges from the continuity among the flux of experiences.<sup>371</sup> While classical metaphysics maintains that the fixed substance contributes to stable identity, Whitehead argued that a fixed substance does not exist. The stabilized subjective identity surfaces only when a stable continuity emerges from a consecutive series of concrescence. In other words, subjective identity is an awareness of a strand of stable inheritance carrying through consecutive concrescences.<sup>372</sup>

The perceiving subject is in continuum with the perceived outside world.<sup>373</sup> Whitehead maintained that a series of concrescing processes construct reality. The subject becomes an object perceived by another subject. Each process prehends experiences from other objects. The outcome of a past concrescence becomes an object prehended by the present concrescence, and the outcome of the present concrescence will become an object prehended by later concrescence.<sup>374</sup> Thus, all concrescences are equally privileged and are taken into account in painting the holistic picture of reality.

Whitehead further developed his concept of subjectivity and objectivity in a temporal fashion. He proposed that the past is objective.<sup>375</sup> It cannot be changed, and it provides the 'fact' for the immediate present. He also insisted that the present is in becoming. Subjectivity emerges in the present. As time pass, the present becomes the past, and the future becomes the present. Hence, present subjectivity always embraces the past objectivity and moves along with time

---

<sup>370</sup> PR 85.

<sup>371</sup> PR 208.

<sup>372</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 187-188.

<sup>373</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Mode of Thought* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1996), 21.

<sup>374</sup> Whitehead, *Mode of Thought*, 21.

<sup>375</sup> PR 343.

forwards future.<sup>376</sup> In other words, the present subject continues to evolve and become the object. The subject always moves along and never settles down to be a fixed entity. This revolutionary idea spouts out two noteworthy insights. First, subjectivity and objectivity are not fixed. They could be in an alternative and mutually amalgamated. Second, subjectivity is always temporal. Process theologian Lewis Ford aptly summarizes, “What is objective is the past, while subjective immediacy is the present. If so, subjectivity is necessarily temporal, excluding any nontemporal subjectivity.”<sup>377</sup> In other words, Whitehead permanently linked temporality with subjectivity.

In light of Whitehead’s understanding of interweaving subjects and objects, I propose to understand that the divine call is a coordinated web of many interwoven events. In order to achieve God’s vision in the world, the divine call must be like a coordinated web so that the holistic divine plan can simultaneously inspire different subjects.

#### **3.4.4 Unity between Being and Acting**

According to classical philosophy, as represented by Plato, the actor is the originator of actions. The actor exists; hence actions follow. The actor is the subject, and the action is the predicate attributing to the subject. Extending the classical thinking in divine calling, there is a receiver first, then she receives the divine call. In other words, the being precedes the acting. The subject precedes experience. However, Whitehead’s ontology breaks down such dichotomy.<sup>378</sup> The subject is not the antecedence of her experience. The experience and the subject are intertwined and in unity.<sup>379</sup> The subject emerges from experience, but the experience is also guided by subjective decisions.

---

<sup>376</sup> PR 343.

<sup>377</sup> Ford, *Transforming Process Theism*, 75.

<sup>378</sup> PR 24.

<sup>379</sup> PR 24.

Whitehead's philosophy provides a fresh perspective to see the relationship between divine calling and its receiver. As acting and the being interplay, I understand that the divine call and the receiver are inseparable. The divine calling itself is intertwined together with the very core of the receiver. It is also fair to say that humans, as the receiver of divine calling, is defined by and inseparable from divine calling.

### **3.4.5 The Experience of Divine Calling**

Whitehead believed that God is involved in all experiences in the world. For Whitehead, religious intuition is not an exceptional vision or out-of-this-world experience. It is the feeling and discernment inherent in our pre-thematic intuition.<sup>380</sup> I understand that it is similar to Schleiermacher's idea of absolute dependence. The experience of God is innate and fundamental to existence. It also permeates every activity we participate in. For Whitehead, every moment of experience depends upon the unconscious prehension of God. Whitehead forcefully argued that the ontological structure of a 'religious intuition' is exactly the same as the ontological structure of all conscious 'feelings' or prehensions.<sup>381</sup> I believe Whitehead's pre-thematic experience idea can help us see the divine call as the mediation of the divine lure to the unconscious decision. In other words, the religious term 'calling' permeates all mundane activities. As Paul said, "for in Him we live and move and exist." (Acts 17:28 NRSV) Hence, I propose that God's calling is pervasive. It permeates every conscious and subconscious experience and decision.

According to Whitehead's cosmology, there are four distinctive features I infer to divine calling. First, God's calling is persuasive rather than coercive. In line with Whitehead's emphasis on freedom and creativity, God's calling does not have coercive binding power on humans.

---

<sup>380</sup> Whitehead, *Religion in Making*, 48.

<sup>381</sup> PR 231.

Humans have to make decisions to accept or decline divine calls with their subjectivity. Divine calls are persuasive suggestions to ‘lure’ the called subject to achieve a high level of satisfaction.

Second, God’s calling is the foundation from which occasion inherits transcendental reference point for self-identity. The initial aim, values, and potentials are instances of transcendental reference points, as Whitehead claims. They are necessary conditions for occasions to evolve, but they are not originated from the occasions. As each occasion emerges and perils on its own, it needs to have transcendental reference points outside to derive its meanings and purposes beyond itself. I take up Whitehead on this topic to show that God’s calling provides such transcendental reference points.

Third, the divine call as I understand it shapes the subject development. The subject in Whitehead’s metaphysics is a relational subject. It constitutes itself by relations open to them during concreting. However, not all relations are opened up for any concreting. God acts through the initial aim, aka divine call, opens and limits what relations are available in the concreting.<sup>382</sup> As a result, the subject development is shaped by the relations available for them during concreting. Simply put, God uses the divine call to ‘select’ relations for shaping the subject development process.

Fourth, the divine call is the blueprint of guiding the world to achieve a greater intensity of order, beauty, and goodness. Without God’s coordinating guidance, each concreting process moves in different directions, as Whitehead understands it. Chaos would be the inevitable result. However, as God communicates his vision through calling, concreting processes progress in coordinating manners. Hence order and beauty can intensify in the world.

---

<sup>382</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 97.

### 3.4.6 On Freedom

Whitehead's insight on freedom can be helpful to solve the tension between human and divine freedom in divine calling. Whitehead had extensive discussions of freedom.<sup>383</sup> Freedom in human beings as well as every entity is vital in Whitehead's thought. According to Whitehead, human beings must use their freedom to contribute to their self-fulfilling process; even God cannot determine that.<sup>384</sup> Thus, denying human freedom, for Whitehead, is denying the very essence of being human. In fact, events of the world flourish only because freedom thrives. Whitehead did not doubt that freedom exists. Whitehead's question is what kind of freedom it is and how it can interplay with God's infinite freedom.

According to Whitehead, freedom is not a purposeless, random choosing opportunity. For personal beings, freedom is a conscious decision guided by self-enjoyment.<sup>385</sup> Whitehead understood that not all decisions are the same; some can be chaotic, meaningless, and purposeless. However, some decisions mean intensifying the experience so that the subjects' intensity can be enhanced and they feel more enjoyment.<sup>386</sup> Hence, the discussion of values comes into place. For Whitehead, values come from God. Precisely, God's primordial nature is the storing place of values. God's primordial nature provides the reference grounds so that the aesthetic and ethical contrast can be compared.<sup>387</sup> For highly complex organisms, they not only evolve to intensify their subjectivity; they also strive to enhance their enjoyment in aesthetic and ethical contrasts.<sup>388</sup> To summarize, freedom for Whitehead is the opportunity of maximizing one's self-enjoyment.

---

<sup>383</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 43-68.

<sup>384</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 55.

<sup>385</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 98.

<sup>386</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 99.

<sup>387</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 109.

<sup>388</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 110.

Moreover, freedom also means self-transcendence in Whitehead.<sup>389</sup> For Whitehead, the values of a person are not necessarily recognized by others. She is the only person to judge her own values. She judges her values depending on her enjoyment as well as her self-transcendent. Self-transcendence does not mean the annihilation of the self. Instead, it is similar to the Buddhist idea of ‘no-self.’<sup>390</sup> The Buddhist’s idea of no-self means the self disables her boundary to open up herself to all relations in the world.<sup>391</sup> The stage of ‘no-self’ leads to maximum self-fulfillment. In Whitehead’s terms, self-transcendence means the complex organism consciously opens up to receive others into her subjectivity. When the self transcends, it leads to maximum self-fulfillment.<sup>392</sup>

After clarifying Whitehead’s definition of freedom, I transpose his insights to solve the dilemma between divine freedom and human freedom. Traditionally, freedom is commonly defined as the boundary of permissible acting. One has the freedom to do certain things, which often means one is permitted and able to do certain things. Hence, when God calls upon a person, God’s freedom and the person’s freedom collide. The caller is sovereign, and humans’ only right to respond is submission. As a result, human freedom is limited by God’s calling. Nevertheless, as Whitehead defined, divine freedom and human freedom do not collide if freedom is a guided decision to intensify enjoyment.<sup>393</sup> When God conveys God’s calling to humans, the goal is not to enforce God’s plan.<sup>394</sup> Humans’ responses are not submissive. On the contrary, God’s calling for Whitehead is good.<sup>395</sup> Its goal is to guide humans to reach their full potentials. Humans can only

---

<sup>389</sup> PR 341.

<sup>390</sup> Jan Westerhoff, *Nagarjuna’s Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 153-164.

<sup>391</sup> Westerhoff, *Nagarjuna’s Madhyamaka*, 158.

<sup>392</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 108.

<sup>393</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 98.

<sup>394</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 98.

<sup>395</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 98.



reach maximum enjoyment when they follow God's calling. Moreover, humans can respond to God's calling by their own free will. When a person positively responds to God's calling, her will and God's vision coincide, so she transcends her limited horizon. In conclusion, the divine calling offers her freedom so that she can transcend to maximize her potential.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Whitehead's process philosophy is valuable to the theory of divine calling because it provides a viable framework to understand how the divine call operates in philosophical terms. Before I move to expound on the experiential aspect of divine call, let me recapture the major features of divine call inspired by Whitehead.

First, according to Whitehead, God has two natures. On the one hand, there is primordial nature so that God can be the 'foundation' of all temporal actual entities. It provides the goals, inspirations, possibilities to every occasion in the world. On the other hand, there is consequent nature, which absorbs the world and evolves with it. In light of this dipolar nature of God, I propose that the relationship between the caller and the being called is bilateral. God is both giving and receiving when God calls. The primordial nature provides the divinely inspired appetite to the world. So the world will get its satisfaction when they fulfill God's vision. The consequent nature is God's self-actualization from the world. God incorporates the world's response into the process of God's becoming. The world's response to the divine call becomes part of God when they are incorporated into God.

Second, God's persuasion to the world is conveyed through the initial aim according to Whitehead. Insofar as the initial aim communicates God's vision and persuades the world, I claim that it is the divine call. As the initial aim is embedded into the ontological structure of every event,

I argue that divine call is immanent inside humans rather than from the outside. Moreover, it communicates through inspiration and persuasion as Whitehead's depiction of the initial aim.

Third, according to Whitehead, personhood develops through cumulative habit. I extend Whitehead's idea of personhood and propose when a person develops the habit to 'listen' to God, she becomes an acute listener to God's call. She also acquires a new self-identity as a person-called-by-God.

Fourth, according to Whitehead, the world processes may fall short of fulfilling God's vision, but they will eventually be saved by incorporating into God's self. I understand that humans could rebel against the divine call and fall short of their purposes and full potentials. However, Whitehead's idea of final incorporation in God guarantees that God's vision will be eventually fulfilled. Thus, the divine calling is effectual. We all will fulfill our callings either in the world or ultimately in God.

Fifth, according to Whitehead's metaphysics, divine-human interaction has a distinctive feature: God is persuasive rather than coercive. I argue that God's calling also is persuasive. In line with Whitehead's emphasis on freedom and creativity, I see that humans have to make their own decisions to accept or decline divine calls. The divine call is a persuasive suggestion to 'lure' the called subject to achieve her full potential. Humans can reach the maximum enjoyment when they follow God's call.

In light of Whitehead's pan-experiencism, we avoid anthropocentric hubris in heeding the divine call. Through the metaphysics of Whitehead, we now see the world as a connected living organic whole instead of dead raw materials. The heed of divine calling can help us live out God's vision in harmony with all other creations. After stipulating the mechanism of divine calling

inspired by Whitehead, I will turn to medieval theologian Meister Eckhart to explore the experiential aspect of divine calling.

## **Chapter 4 - The Experience of Divine Calling: Meister Eckhart's Mystical Theology and Divine Calling**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In the second chapter, I have explicated the insights of divine calling in terms of the framework of revelation. The theology of Karl Barth shows us the way of divine-human interaction shaped by divine sovereignty. The theology of revelation can serve as the theological foundation to outline how the entire triune God relates to humans in the salvation history. In the third chapter, I have elaborated on the possible mechanism of divine calling contributed by Whitehead's process philosophy. Whitehead's process philosophy offers insights to understand how God's persuasion mechanism, embedded in the metaphysical structure of every existence, operates as the divine calling.

In this chapter, I explore the mystical and experiential aspects of the divine calling. Inspired by the theology of Barth, I have established the nature of divine calling as God's relating act through Christ in history. While Barth's theology illuminates the external dimension of divine call in history, Eckhart's theology can illuminate the internal dimension of the divine call in the soul. I expound on Meister Eckhart's theology of the ground, which can fill what is lacking from the expositions of Barth and Whitehead. I claim in this chapter that the experience of divine calling coincides with Eckhart's experience of union with the ground. Both transform humans to live in accord with God. I also insist that Eckhart's theology of the ground can help us understand the experience of divine calling in light of a new open boundary identity. When a person acquires an open boundary self, she genuinely cares for others as God cares.

This chapter will first explicate Eckhart's theological form. His understanding of human predicaments sets up the background for his theology. Next, I expound on his philosophy of the

ground, which depicts the nature of God and humans in a revolutionary way. Then I will explicate the theology of experience according to his major themes. Finally, I will apply his insights on the experience of divine calling and elaborate its implications for the Christian life.

## **4.2 Meister Eckhart's Mystical Theology and Its Form**

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1328) is famous in the history of Christianity for his ideas about the mystical union between the soul and God—specifically the birth of the Son in the soul.<sup>396</sup> The union between God and humans is so important in his theology that he innovated a new philosophical framework to describe it. Unfortunately, he was accused as a heretic for the confusion of humans and divine nature. Eckhart died in 1328 before the completion of the heresy trial. About a year later, on March 27, 1329, Pope John XII issued condemnations of seventeen articles for Eckhart's teaching as heretical and eleven under the suspicion of heresy. There is no question that Eckhart's philosophical teaching was original but controversial. However, Davies Oliver, also citing other Eckhartian scholars, such as Otto Karrer and Kurt Ruh, suggests that the condemnation probably was politically motivated rather than purely doctrinal.<sup>397</sup>

### **4.2.1 The Theological Agenda of Meister Eckhart**

As a leader in the Dominican order, Eckhart was involved in various ministerial roles. He was a professional academic, a famous preacher, and an experienced spiritual advisor. Eckhart's roles influence his theological agenda and his written works. Understanding his academic and ministerial roles can provide a valuable lens to interpret his works.

---

<sup>396</sup> Mojsisch, Burkhard and Orrin F. Summerell, "Meister Eckhart" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta ed., <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/meister-eckhart/>. Accessed on 10 July 2021.

<sup>397</sup> Oliver Davies, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian* (Perthshire: Ashford Colour Press, 1991), 44-45. Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1985), 173. J. Koch, *Kleine Schriften* (I: Rome, 1973), 321.

Eckhart's academic role motivated him to stipulate a philosophy to describe the reality of God and the world. He studied at Cologne and the University of Paris in 1286 and was appointed as lecturer of theology at different points of his life. He was well versed in the medieval philosophy of his time and was famous in the academic circle in Paris. In 1302, he was appointed as external Dominican chair of theology in Paris. As a medieval theologian, Eckhart attempted to understand God and human interaction in a new way. Eckhart adopted Neo-Platonism as his philosophical framework and also borrowed many vital ideas from St. Augustine. He sought new philosophical terms to stipulate the reality he tried to describe. Eventually, Eckhart constructed an innovative philosophy of the ground to describe the nature of humans and God. He appealed directly to the origin of the life force, which he also called 'the ground,' to break the boundary between God and humans. Eckhart's innovative way of breaking the human and divine boundaries can inspire a new understanding of God and human interaction in divine calling, as I aim to show in this chapter.

The preacher Eckhart was inclined to use vivid examples to draw audiences' attention. Eckhart was a famous preacher in the Dominican order.<sup>398</sup> Like all the skillful preachers, Eckhart employed daily illustrations to help audiences understand sophisticated philosophical concepts. The relation between a just person and justice was a frequently used example to illustrate metaphysical participation.<sup>399</sup> He often reused his examples like many popular preachers. He sometimes used a similar example to convey a different emphasis in different settings. For example, he used the biblical story of Martha and Mary on different occasions. One time he used it to illustrate the

---

<sup>398</sup> After Eckhart was condemned as a heretic, many of his sermons were destroyed. Fortunately, a few valuable sermons were preserved by his faithful followers. He preached in Latin and German. The Latin sermons were mostly preached in academic settings and for educated audiences. The German sermons were for uneducated or public audiences. Eckhartian scholars agree that the Latin sermons are more formal and logically rigid. Instead, Eckhart showed more boldness and liberty in his German sermons. (Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 182).

<sup>399</sup> Maurice O'C Walshe, ed. and trans., *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2010), 305. All subsequent references to this text are cited as W.

supremacy of active service rather than the contemplative life.<sup>400</sup> At other times, he used Martha to elaborate the metaphysical union with God in actions.<sup>401</sup> It is fair to say that Eckhart's usages of examples were imprecise; one should not stipulate theological proposition merely by his examples.

Moreover, Eckhart liked to overstate examples and exaggerate words to shock his listeners. Some of his words were outrageous. For example, he told his audiences, "you can become the father of the Son of Trinity."<sup>402</sup> This bold statement is sacrilegious. It also captivated his listeners to pursue the rebirth of divine reality in the soul. Eckhartian scholar Richard Woods analyzes the style of Eckhart's preaching, and writes, "Eckhart's daring expressions, designed to provoke his hearers into attending both to the divine presence within and to the world outside by often outrageous comparisons, puns and comic examples, seem to have particularly irritated the guardians of pious sobriety."<sup>403</sup> Eckhart's words in sermons therefore should not be understood as a statement of fact; instead, they are preaching devices meant to inspire the audiences to see a new possibility of existence and pursue it.

In his role as a spiritual advisor, Eckhart used his words to motivate action rather than describe theoretical concepts. According to Oliver Davies, Eckhart was a respected spiritual advisor for his monastic order and German convents.<sup>404</sup> Eckhart's words were meant to direct his advisees to pursue divine union as a spiritual advisor. The primary goal was to lead the advisees to know themselves and enter the divine presence. Eckhart understood that life is more than mental exercises. Actions springing from experience is an essential element of healthy spirituality. Thus,

---

<sup>400</sup> W 84.

<sup>401</sup> W 77.

<sup>402</sup> W 441.

<sup>403</sup> Richard J. Woods, O.P., *Meister Eckhart: Master of Mystics* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 18.

<sup>404</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 51-79.

Eckhart guided his advisees to transport the experience of divine presence to world-serving actions. German Eckhartian scholar Reiner Schurmann is correct to say that Eckhart's thought is imperative rather than indicative.<sup>405</sup> Eckhart focused more on using words to trigger actions rather than depict facts. For example, Eckhart's teaching on the deification of human nature was very offensive to the orthodoxy provided it was read as a statement of fact about human nature. However, it makes sense if it was read as imperative teaching to motivate the audience to overcome human-divine differences and seek to stay with God. Eckhart thus displayed more interest in what his words could do rather than in what words could accurately describe.

#### **4.2.2 The Predicaments of the Natural Human State**

Christianity teaches that humans in the natural state do not live in harmony with God. For Eckhart, humans are in a predicament where they cannot unite with God. The central theological problem Eckhart addressed throughout his academic and ministerial works was to overcome the obstacles against connecting to God. Eckhart's sketch on the natural human state is valuable for understanding the obstacles of experiencing the divine call. The divine call is obscure and cannot be easily discerned when humans are distracted by the material world. We can borrow Eckhart's insights on the natural human state to examine the obstacles in receiving the divine call.

Eckhart understands that there is a living life source from which every creation inherits its fulness. Eckhart calls it the ground (*Grund* in German), which is divinity. The living energy flows from the ground to every being, while creations without connection to the ground will collapse into nothingness.<sup>406</sup> Creations do not exist by themselves; instead, they depend upon God's energy

---

<sup>405</sup> Reiner Schurmann, *Wandering Joy: Meister Eckhart's Mystical Philosophy* (Massachusetts: Lindisfarne Books, 2001), 29.

<sup>406</sup> Eckhart was condemned that he taught "All creatures are pure nothing" according to the Papal Bull, Proposition No. 26. See Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Philosopher of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 107.



to sustain them.<sup>407</sup> Likewise, humans need to connect to the ground unceasingly to live to their full potential.<sup>408</sup>

The main obstacle of experiencing God for Eckhart is that humans are naturally attached to this material world. As a neo-Platonist thinker, Eckhart presupposes the bifurcation between the material and the spiritual world. The real is in the spiritual realm, whereas the material realm contains nothing but illusions to distract people from the real. According to Eckhart, human beings pay too much attention to the affairs in this world.<sup>409</sup> The trivialities of this world ensnare humans in illusions, so the ‘here and there’ occupies people’s minds.<sup>410</sup> Hence, humans become ‘mind wanderers’ when they are attached to the world.<sup>411</sup>

Eckhart lists out various characteristics when a person is attached to the material world. First, she loses her simplicity.<sup>412</sup> When a person is entangled with creaturely things, her energy is also scattered among them. Robert Forman points out that Eckhart believes life energy is in the soul.<sup>413</sup> Life energy is supposed to stay in the soul. Whereas when the soul attaches to created things, its energy is drawn out.<sup>414</sup> Thus, the soul loses its focus and simplicity.<sup>415</sup>

Second, a person who is attached to the material world loses the connection to eternity. Eckhart believes that temporality is an obstacle against the union with God.<sup>416</sup> The world is temporal; things happen in turn, one thing after another. Eckhart understands that the human mind operates like a concentric circle, whose outer rim is attached to the temporal earthy activities, while

---

<sup>407</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 107.

<sup>408</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 107.

<sup>409</sup> W 177.

<sup>410</sup> Robert K.C. Forman, *Meister Eckhart: The Mystic as Theologian* (Massachusetts: Element Books Limited, 1991), 97.

<sup>411</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 97.

<sup>412</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 71.

<sup>413</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 69.

<sup>414</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 76

<sup>415</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 71.

<sup>416</sup> W 354

the center is the ground, which is eternal and fixed.<sup>417</sup> The outer rim busily circles along with temporal things.<sup>418</sup> Schurmann summarizes that, for Eckhart, the human mind can be easily captivated by the flux within the world; thereby, they lose focus on eternity.<sup>419</sup>

Third, an attached person for Eckhart is captivated by the images or representations of things.<sup>420</sup> In my interpretation, Eckhart understands that the mind is like a projection screen. Created things project their images and representations on the mind. According to Eckhart, when the attached person receives the creaturely images in the mind, she also claims ownership of the image.<sup>421</sup> Thus, the images are seen as her ‘properties.’ As long as she perceives that she can use and enjoy the ‘properties’ as her wish,<sup>422</sup> the ‘properties’ always get the person’s attention.<sup>423</sup>

Forth, among all the attachments to creatures, the greatest attachment for Eckhart is to the self. When a person is attached to self, she is consumed by her self-image.<sup>424</sup> She sees herself as a fixed identity.<sup>425</sup> Moreover, she will constantly be conscious of herself and compare herself to a fixed identity.<sup>426</sup> As a result, she ‘forgets’ her true self and always feels conflicts within the self.<sup>427</sup>

Fifth, an attached person for Eckart is one who lives in isolation. Eckhart proposes that the spiritual realm connected to the ground is the whole of reality.<sup>428</sup> When a person loses the connection to the ground, she is out of touch with her own being and the other beings.<sup>429</sup> Hence,

---

<sup>417</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 14.

<sup>418</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 14.

<sup>419</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 14.

<sup>420</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 85.

<sup>421</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 86.

<sup>422</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 85.

<sup>423</sup> I see the influence of Eckhart’s thought on Martin Heidegger here. Heidegger sees that being-in-the-world does not see things as it appears to be, instead she sees things as ready-on-hand. That means being-in-the world is entrapped to see things ego-centrally and utilitarianly.

<sup>424</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 87.

<sup>425</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 87.

<sup>426</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 88.

<sup>427</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 88.

<sup>428</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 138.

<sup>429</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 138.

the attached person feels isolated because she can only fragmentarily relate to creatures. She is disconnected from the whole of reality. Forman sums up Eckhart's view that the natural state of humans is being stuck in an estranged self within a fragmented world.<sup>430</sup>

In conclusion, the most important thing for Eckhart concerning the human predicament is the disconnection from the ground. When humans are captivated by the world, they lose their essential connection to the ground. An individual needs to discover the 'ground' from within and reconnect to it.<sup>431</sup> Eckhart's understanding of the ground reminds us of the experiential aspect of divine calling. It is difficult to experience the divine call when we are distracted by the material world. Insofar as the divine call relates a person's core being to God, the experience cannot be found anywhere in this material world.

### **4.2.3 The Ground**

Eckhart develops a philosophy of the ground as an archetype to frame his theology. It is unique and original, which breaks away from other theologies in his time. I now expound on his philosophy of the ground so that we can understand his stipulations on divine nature and creations.

Eckhart uses the term 'ground' in a precise way and bases his entire theology on this concept. The term 'ground' is a complex one with its historical legacy. What does Eckhart mean by the ground? Bernard McGinn, an American historian of medieval theology, discerns at least four meanings of 'ground' in Middle High German.<sup>432</sup> First, it means a physical ground, which is namely the earth. Second, it refers to the bottom or lowest part of the body, surface, or structure.

---

<sup>430</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 77.

<sup>431</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 137.

<sup>432</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 39.

Third, it also means origin, cause, beginning, reason, or proof of something. Forth, it means the inmost, hidden part of a being, simply put, the essence of things.<sup>433</sup>

McGinn argues that Eckhart's use of 'ground' is aligned with the third and fourth of his definitions—origin, and inmost essence, respectively.<sup>434</sup> The 'ground' is the origin and the first cause of all that exists. According to McGinn, Eckhart thinks that the discovery of the ground is a spiritual journey.<sup>435</sup> When he writes about how persons must reconnect with their ground, he means they should connect with their origin or life source. In addition, Eckhart also uses 'ground' to denote the essence of things.<sup>436</sup> In Eckhart's discussion of 'ground' and being, he uses 'ground' to explicate how things relate to their respective essences.<sup>437</sup> These two definitions are not mutually exclusive for Eckhart. The origin of things is the essence of things because the essence is derived from the origin.

As the ground is the origin of all essence, the ground is the transcendental criteria of everything. Forman points out that the ground is transcendental for Eckhart, because it is the primary determination in reality.<sup>438</sup> The primary determination exists *a priori*, and is realized only within itself.<sup>439</sup> According to Kurt Flasch, the primary determination has brought everything into existence.<sup>440</sup> Being, oneness, and goodness are within the primary determination.<sup>441</sup> Nothing is beyond and above the primary determination.<sup>442</sup> Moreover, the primary determination is real; it is

---

<sup>433</sup> McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 39.

<sup>434</sup> McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 39.

<sup>435</sup> McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 39.

<sup>436</sup> McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 40.

<sup>437</sup> McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 40.

<sup>438</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 137.

<sup>439</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 137.

<sup>440</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 80.

<sup>441</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 78.

<sup>442</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 79.

not an abstraction.<sup>443</sup> The primary determination is the reality that supports all existences.<sup>444</sup> The ground for Eckhart is similar to what the twentieth-century theologian Paul Tillich refers to as ‘the ground of being’ or Being itself.<sup>445</sup> Put differently, all beings are derived from the ground. The function of Being itself to Tillich is equivalent to the ground to Eckhart.

While the ground is the source of all that exists, it does not have any specific determination. As such, it carries a similar meaning as the ‘receptacle’ in Plato’s *Timaeus*.<sup>446</sup> According to Plato, everything is derived from the receptacle, and the receptacle holds all the potentials.<sup>447</sup> For Plato, the receptacle is the sacred space where universals and forms flow and exchange.<sup>448</sup> Eckhart considers the ground does the same as Plato’s receptacle. Eckhart teaches that the ground is the ‘raw material,’ so to speak, from which all existence is made up. All beings also inherit their forms from the ground.

The ground is a unified whole that has no boundary. Eckhart understands that the ground is unlike beings. Beings individualize by themselves because they have boundaries and exist in isolation.<sup>449</sup> However, everything unites in the ground, and there is no differentiation within the ground. The ground includes everything and also is everything. All positive distinctions of beings are negated when they are in the ground. Hence, there is no difference inside the ground. Flasch further recognizes that there is no difference between the ground and that which the ground principiates.<sup>450</sup> Eckhart believes that the ground and the participating beings are in absolute unity.

---

<sup>443</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 82

<sup>444</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 83.

<sup>445</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Reason and Revelation, Being and God*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 235–6.

<sup>446</sup> R. G. Bury, ed. and trans., *Plato: Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 48.

<sup>447</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 86.

<sup>448</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 188.

<sup>449</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 133.

<sup>450</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 79.

There is no difference between the two. Thus, Eckhart says that the ground is the ‘negation of negation.’<sup>451</sup> While distinctions separate beings, all the distinctions are negated within the ground. Hence, no more distinctions can be found in the realm of the ground.

Agreeing with Neo-Platonic metaphysics, Eckhart maintains that all creaturely beings exist in a hierarchical structure.<sup>452</sup> Their superiority depends on their proximity to the One, which is on the top.<sup>453</sup> However, Eckhart insists that the hierarchy of beings breaks down when beings directly connect to the ground on the top.<sup>454</sup> Through connecting to the ground, beings evade their preordained hierarchy. Thus, everything is equal in superiority within the ground.

Eckhart’s theory of the ground breaks from the Aristotelian account of the four causes. According to Aristotelian metaphysics, reality comprises four causes: formal, efficient, material, and final causes. However, the theory of the ground eliminates efficient and final causality.<sup>455</sup> The ground is imminent. It obliterates the efficient cause because entities directly derive their beings from the ground without any mediation in-between.<sup>456</sup> The ground also obliterates the final cause because there is no more *telos* of things.<sup>457</sup> There is no external force to guide beings to their destiny because the ground has no specific determination on fixed destinies.<sup>458</sup> According to Eckhart, things just act according to their essences. They exist and evolve without any predestinated path.

Eckhart portrays the ground as a dynamic cycle. It flows in a cycle and is perpetually in becoming.<sup>459</sup> The ground overflows its essence to sprout beings, and the essence of things also

---

<sup>451</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 114.

<sup>452</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 86.

<sup>453</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 86.

<sup>454</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 86.

<sup>455</sup> W 46; Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 127.

<sup>456</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 127.

<sup>457</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 127.

<sup>458</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 127.

<sup>459</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 144.

unites back to the ground.<sup>460</sup> Eckhart writes, “The giving ground, what has come out of it, and the unity of both – can be found in all things, in nature as well as in human productions.”<sup>461</sup> Eckhart also writes, “God’s being is moving, effervescent, and prolific. It flows back into himself as the totality of a turning back or reflection.”<sup>462</sup> Technically speaking, the ground is different from God; the ground is Godhead. However, Eckhart’s usage of the term is imprecise in sermons. He sometimes simply uses God to denote the uncreated realm of the ground.<sup>463</sup> For Eckhart, the ground involves the ever-moving cycle of giving birth to beings and also returning them to their origin.

To summarize, Eckhart’s philosophy of the ground breaks down the boundaries between God and humans. Insofar as the boundaries between God and humans are gone, we can understand divine and human natures in a whole new way. In the following sections, I first explicate the divine nature in the light of God and Godhead. Then I explicate human nature and intellect. The experience of divine calling will be stipulated according to the new light of the divine and human nature.

#### **4.2.4 God and Godhead**

The ground, for Eckhart, is the life source of everything, including God. For Eckhart, the ground in God is Godhead. Eckhart proposes that the ground is the primary determination of reality, which is the life force that gives rise to beings.<sup>464</sup> Beings come into existence because of the ground.<sup>465</sup>

---

<sup>460</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 144.

<sup>461</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 183.

<sup>462</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 144.

<sup>463</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 183.

<sup>464</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 77.

<sup>465</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 78.

For Eckhart, the three persons of Trinity are beings too.<sup>466</sup> They are derived from the Godhead, which is the ground inside God.<sup>467</sup>

Eckhart firmly stands in the apophatic tradition that upholds that God is beyond all human capacity to understand. Eckhart argues that God is transcendent beyond created dimension. Hence, knowing God is the process of ‘stripping away’ (*aphaeresis*) images and concepts. God is ineffable because God is pure nothingness compared to anything in the creation realm. Insofar as God is beyond forms, God is nothingness.<sup>468</sup> Eckhart claims, “if God is neither goodness nor being nor truth nor one, what then is he? He is pure nothing (*nihtes niht*); he is neither this nor that. If you think of anything he might be, he is not that.”<sup>469</sup> Moreover, Eckart argues that God is the negation of negation<sup>470</sup>. Creatures are isolated because they are separated by distinctions.<sup>471</sup> However, the distinctions of creatureliness are completely eradicated when one is united in God.<sup>472</sup> Eckhart wants to disrupt the conventional idea of God. He intends to obliterate all the representations of God, even the very notion of God. Eckhart understands that God cannot be an object in human understanding. Hence, any metaphysical configuration and representation of metaphysical transcendence are inappropriate. As such, God must always be the ground in human experience. Eckhart rejects any objectification of God. So he uses the term Godhead to represent the nameless life force, which is unnameable and nothingness.

---

<sup>466</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 109.

<sup>467</sup> Eckhart does not use the term ‘God’ with any consistency. Technically speaking, for Eckhart Godhead is equivalent to the ground. It differs from the persons of Trinity, the triune God. Eckhart uses Godhead to differentiate the ground from the triune God as beings. However, he does not frequently use the term Godhead outside of the academic settings. He simply uses ‘God’ in many of his sermons (W 12). In some sermons, he uses God to refer to God’s nature (W 38), which technically speaking should be more accurately referred as Godhead. In other sermons, he uses God to refer to the entirety of God (W 287), including both Godhead and three persons of Trinity.

<sup>468</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 113.

<sup>469</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 114.

<sup>470</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 114.

<sup>471</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 114.

<sup>472</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 115.



According to Platonism, universals are actual subsistence in the realm of forms, and all things that come into existence are copies of forms. Eckhart adopts Platonism and proposes that Godhead resides in the mystical realm where all the uncreated and uncreatable forms subsist. When Eckhart links Godhead to the realm of form, he implies that the divine nature encompasses forms. As all existences are reflections of the forms, they derive their essence from Godhead. Put differently, Godhead is immanent in all existence because it is the source of originality.<sup>473</sup> Flasch points out, for Eckhart, all creatures receive their beings on loan from the Godhead.<sup>474</sup> He writes, “The Godhead is flow of forms. It is Being that has support in itself for everything, and at the same time is a grace that melts out and discloses itself to all creatures.”<sup>475</sup> To sum up, Eckhart believes that Godhead emanates God’s nature to give life to beings.

For Eckhart, God creates by sharing God’s nature. Godhead overflows God’s nature in the performing movement, so that the whole of God’s self is given to creatures. Eckhart’s exposition of the *Imago Dei* explains that God’s nature cannot stop emanating. When Godhead emanates, whose nature is shared to creatures. When creatures receive God’s nature; hence, they reflect God’s image.<sup>476</sup> Thus, Eckhart insists that God is the creator through emanation, since Godhead is the origin from which everything inherited its form.<sup>477</sup> Schurmann acutely points out that Eckhart’s understanding of creation deviates from orthodoxy. He summarizes Eckhart’s idea, “God is not chiefly considered by him in Christian terms, as the Creator, but as the infinite dimension that offers itself to man.”<sup>478</sup> For Eckhart, God does not create by God’s act of creation; instead God creates by sharing God’s being.

---

<sup>473</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 213.

<sup>474</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 202.

<sup>475</sup> W 211.

<sup>476</sup> W 191-192.

<sup>477</sup> Aquinas emphasized that God is the creator because of God’s acting. Hence, God is the first cause of creation.

<sup>478</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 175.

Eckhart proposes that the persons of the Trinity come into existence from Godhead.<sup>479</sup> Godhead is the essence, while the three persons are substantial relations.<sup>480</sup> The three persons derive from the Godhead.<sup>481</sup> In other words, Godhead becomes the triune God in the flow of self-objectification.<sup>482</sup>

God evolves unceasingly in the cycle of becoming and unbecoming for Eckhart. First, the three persons of Trinity originate from the Godhead.<sup>483</sup> Then, the three persons of Trinity act upon creations and bring the creations to God.<sup>484</sup> Finally, the triune God will unbecome the differentiation and return to Godhead.<sup>485</sup> The three persons will become One in the same nature again.<sup>486</sup> The cycle of becoming and unbecoming, differentiation, and union eternally repeat in God according to Eckhart.<sup>487</sup> The purpose of God's cycling movement is, for Eckhart, to share God's nature with creation. God evolves along with creation in order to bring the creation into God's self.<sup>488</sup> The production of the Word illustrates this process.<sup>489</sup> Eckhart explains that God wants to disclose God's self, so God produces the Word—the Son.<sup>490</sup> The Son then invites all to share the sonship so that they can share God's nature.<sup>491</sup> Whoever accepts the Son's invitation and participates in his life, becomes the son of God.<sup>492</sup> Thus, the production of the Son is for sharing God's very nature.<sup>493</sup> When we inherit God's sonship, we are indeed brought into the life of God.

---

<sup>479</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 148.

<sup>480</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 148.

<sup>481</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 150.

<sup>482</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 29.

<sup>483</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 148.

<sup>484</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 118.

<sup>485</sup> W 300.

<sup>486</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 183.

<sup>487</sup> W 356.

<sup>488</sup> W 358.

<sup>489</sup> W 29.

<sup>490</sup> W 30.

<sup>491</sup> W 30.

<sup>492</sup> W 268.

<sup>493</sup> W 269.

Eckhart's proposal of God's cycling movement can provide a valuable perspective into the human-divine relationships, which is also the core issue of divine calling. According to Eckhart, God does not act to relate to creations, but God shares God's nature. In the Eckhartian framework, I propose that divine calling is a disclosure of God's nature. The evolvment between God and humans is not bound by external action; rather it occurs through participation in the divine nature. In other words, God initiates the divine calling by inviting humans to participate in God's nature. God's movement of sharing God's self to humans guarantees that humans can relate to God.

#### **4.2.5 Human Being and the Intellect**

After we examined the nature of God according to the ground, I now turn to expound on human nature. The relation between the human soul and the ground can shed new light on how humans relate to God.

For Eckhart, the human soul is the interface between two aspects of reality: the spiritual aspect connects to God, and the material aspect connects to the external world. Eckhart teaches that the human soul is created at a point between time and eternity.<sup>494</sup> The lower point touches with time and the world, but the higher point connects to eternity.<sup>495</sup> In parallel, he also teaches that the soul has two eyes: one outward eye and one inward eye.<sup>496</sup> The outward eye turns towards all creatures. It observes creatures as images.<sup>497</sup> Whereas the inward eye is isolated from all creatures, and it can access totality and universal forms.<sup>498</sup> The inward eye is a transcendent space

---

<sup>494</sup> W 200.

<sup>495</sup> W 141.

<sup>496</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 133.

<sup>497</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 133.

<sup>498</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 134.

deep within the soul to access God.<sup>499</sup> In other words, the inner eye sees into the realm of forms that can access the divine mind.<sup>500</sup>

Eckhart also called the inner eye intellect, which introduces the potential of divinity.<sup>501</sup> Eckhart teaches that divinity is potential within humans; he calls it the ‘spark of the soul.’<sup>502</sup> The spark of the soul is in the mind, the intellect.<sup>503</sup> For Eckhart, the intellect, the ground, the spiritual realm are all connected.<sup>504</sup> The ground is deep inside the mind, so that humans have the potential to transcend beyond creation into the spiritual realm.<sup>505</sup> The intellect provides a secret passage to access the ground and divinity.<sup>506</sup>

The intellect for Eckhart is a transcendent faculty within humans.<sup>507</sup> Eckhart uses the term intellect in line with the Neoplatonic mystical tradition. According to the fourth-century Neoplatonic theologian Pseudo-Dionysius, the Intellect is the unique faculty, which transcends both will and reason. It separates humans from other creations.<sup>508</sup> It is the image of God. In other words, the Intellect is the transcendent space within humans so that they can connect to the One/God.<sup>509</sup> Similarly, Eckhart follows the Neoplatonic tradition and denotes intellect beyond the cognitive faculty.<sup>510</sup> Intellect encompasses both intuition and reason, and through which humans unite with God.

---

<sup>499</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 135.

<sup>500</sup> W 371.

<sup>501</sup> W 371.

<sup>502</sup> W 372.

<sup>503</sup> W 372.

<sup>504</sup> W 372.

<sup>505</sup> W 372.

<sup>506</sup> W 372.

<sup>507</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 64.

<sup>508</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 64.

<sup>509</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 137.

<sup>510</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 120.

Eckhart argues that the human mind shares God's nature.<sup>511</sup> Platonic metaphysics teaches that the essences of things, forms, reside in the universal realm. The 'forms' are more real than the particulars. Eckhart, adopts Platonic metaphysics, teaches that the human mind can access all forms, because it has the potential to know everything. For Eckhart, the human mind is empty and nothingness; it is purely receptive to forms.<sup>512</sup> It is 'in-formed' by divine archetypes so that it can have unlimited access to forms.<sup>513</sup> Put differently, the intellect is the place of representations that has the capability of receiving the forms from God. As such, it can operate in synchrony with the divine mind. When the intellect receives forms from God, it operates as of operation in God's mind.<sup>514</sup> To sum up, the intellect transcends the material realm. It embraces the forms in the divine realm, so it shares in the divine nature.<sup>515</sup>

The intellect is inward looking, for Eckhart, because it has already contained the universe within itself.<sup>516</sup> Apart from the prospect that the intellect can access the totality of forms, Eckhart also insists on the all-embracing aspect of intellect.<sup>517</sup> According to a realist epistemology, the being and thought are connected.<sup>518</sup> As the intellect has the capacity to think everything, it also contains the totality of being.<sup>519</sup> In other words, there is nothing outside of the intellect. Everything is already in the intellect. Insofar as the intellect contains the whole cosmos, it seeks inwardly to know reality.

Humans, according to Eckhart, can share the divine nature owing to the unique features of the intellect. Eckhartian scholar Oliver Davies acutely summarizes five unique features of intellect;

---

<sup>511</sup> W 255.

<sup>512</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 186.

<sup>513</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 186.

<sup>514</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 186.

<sup>515</sup> W xv.

<sup>516</sup> W 155.

<sup>517</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 120.

<sup>518</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 184.

<sup>519</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 120.

his summary is a following. First, it belongs to the realm of the eternal.<sup>520</sup> It is free from ‘here and now.’ The intellect directly accesses forms. It does not contain particular and material that can be affected by time and change. Second, the intellect has nothing in common with anything else. This is because everything else is fragmented, partial, and incomplete, whereas the intellect is in totality.<sup>521</sup> Hence, it is not in common with anything else. Third, while the intellect contains the totality of the world, there is nothing outside the intellect.<sup>522</sup> We can know everything in the intellect. Fourth, the intellect reflects upon itself—in other words, the intellect is inward-looking.<sup>523</sup> It searches itself through its innermost reflection. Fifth, the intellect is the image of God.<sup>524</sup> Insofar as the intellect has the god-like property to contain the universals, it has the same nature as God’s. Hence, the intellect is the image of God and can be united with God.

For Eckhart, the intellect to humans is equivalent to Godhead to God.<sup>525</sup> Davies makes a meaningful parallel between Godhead and intellect.<sup>526</sup> God is derived from Godhead, and God also returns to God’s origin—Godhead; in parallel, the essence of humans is derived from the intellect, and humans return to their origin through the intellect.<sup>527</sup> The intellect comprises the inner power to unite humans to the ground.<sup>528</sup> In short, the intellect is the essence of humans, and humans have to retreat into the intellect to return to their origin.

Eckhart teaches that the intellect is the place where the Son is born.<sup>529</sup> When the human soul unites with the ground, the operation in God’s mind also reflects in the intellect. Godhead

---

<sup>520</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 136.

<sup>521</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 136.

<sup>522</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 136.

<sup>523</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 136.

<sup>524</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 136.

<sup>525</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 157.

<sup>526</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 157.

<sup>527</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 158.

<sup>528</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 158.

<sup>529</sup> W 448.

generates the Son; at the same event, the intellect also reflects the engendering of the Son within the soul.<sup>530</sup> In other words, the process of engendering of the Son in Godhead occurs as a reflection in the human intellect.<sup>531</sup> Eckhart, therefore, says, “the Word reflects itself in the intellect of man,”<sup>532</sup> and “the Son is born in the mind.”<sup>533</sup> In a nutshell, this teaching of the engendering the Son in the intellect proposes that humans and divine life are intimately connected. Even the innermost operation within the Trinity is also reflected in humans.

### **4.3 The Theology from Experience**

As we have examined Eckhart’s unconventional stipulation of divine and human nature according to the philosophy of the ground, we can understand the interaction between humans and God in a new light. According to Eckhartian perspective, I claim that the relationship between God and humans is ontological rather than accidental. God calls a person from inside the deepest of being so that a person needs to turn inward to seek a relationship with God. Nevertheless, the journey of inward-looking does not start when a person is in her natural state. It is because she is distracted by outside things and attached to creaturely things. Thus, Eckhart teaches detachment for preparing a person of union with the ground.

#### **4.3.1 Detachment**

According to Eckhart, the initial phase of spiritual awakening is detachment. The path of detachment is a path of negation. When a person starts in the path of detachment, she does not receive positive knowledge with specific content. On the contrary, she experiences entering into darkness. According to Eckhart, someone who approaches God will find herself in darkness: “Where in God there is no darkness, only light, but God’s light is inaccessible to human

---

<sup>530</sup> W 255.

<sup>531</sup> W 352.

<sup>532</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 33.

<sup>533</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 33.

intellect.”<sup>534</sup> Eckhart emphasizes that negativity is the first experience of encountering God. One must first detach and cancel earthly desires. The path of detachment frees a person from predefined ideas; then a new perspective emerges in her to see things according to God.

According to Eckhart, detachment helps a person eliminate external distractions and the mental noise from within.<sup>535</sup> First, a person has to let go of materials. Next, she has to let go of all desires, even the desire of God.<sup>536</sup> Then, she also has to let go of images, even images or concepts of God.<sup>537</sup> Finally, she has to let go of the self.<sup>538</sup> Self-abandonment is for exchanging the self for nonself in the ground.

For Eckhart, detachment is the path to prepare a person to connect to the ground. Eckhart portrays the ground as devoid of motion, content, or cognition.<sup>539</sup> Hence, humans also need to clear their minds of images in order to access the ground. A detached person is a person who unites with the ground. When there is no image in her mind, her intellect can receive and reflect God’s image.<sup>540</sup> She unites with God.

When a person is on the path of detachment, for Eckhart, she wants nothing and seeks nothing. She has no will at all.<sup>541</sup> She just lives because she does not need any reason for living.<sup>542</sup> The detached person, therefore, recovers her primordial state of being.<sup>543</sup> Her intellect also frees itself from images. In other words, the intellect releases into its true nature, pure receptivity, when a person becomes detached.<sup>544</sup> The intellect freely receives the forms, the essence of things, from

---

<sup>534</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 151.

<sup>535</sup> W 163.

<sup>536</sup> W 175.

<sup>537</sup> W 243.

<sup>538</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 53.

<sup>539</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 105.

<sup>540</sup> W 328.

<sup>541</sup> W 432.

<sup>542</sup> W 432.

<sup>543</sup> W 448.

<sup>544</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 11.



God directly. As such, detachment is completed by fertility.<sup>545</sup> As a detached person is no longer occupied with contingent representations; instead, she lives in subsistent 'ideas.'<sup>546</sup> In my words, a detached person is freed from the distractions of the phenomenal world and lives only concerning eternal things.

When the detached person is freed from the phenomenal world, she also is freed from time.<sup>547</sup> In the moment where the detached soul connects to the ground, time is transcended.<sup>548</sup> Perception is no longer bound by cause and effect, before and after. Everything is known by its essence in the 'eternal now.'<sup>549</sup> In Eckhart's language, things are accepted in the 'naked form' with equanimity.<sup>550</sup> Through the connection to the ground, a person directly accesses the essence of things without the restraint of corporeal limitation.<sup>551</sup>

I found that Eckhart's instruction of detachment is helpful advice to pursue the divine calling. One does not heed the divine calling for positive knowledge of specific content. She has to start with detaching earthly desires and discharging assumptions on the calling of God. Detachment is the necessary preparation for experiencing divine calling. Eckhart's theology not only is indicative because he does not merely explain what happens when a person connects to the ground; it also is imperative, for it teaches us how to make ourselves available to receive God's calling. Then the divine grace comes.

---

<sup>545</sup> W 133.

<sup>546</sup> According to Thomas Aquinas, the idea is the preexisting cause of the creating effects. The creator has ideas first, and then God creates according to God's ideas. Documentation

<sup>547</sup> W 178.

<sup>548</sup> W 178.

<sup>549</sup> W 178.

<sup>550</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 15.

<sup>551</sup> W 300.

### 4.3.2 Grace

Grace is bestowed on humans after detachment, according to Eckhart.<sup>552</sup> While the detachment prepares humans into a state of passivity as preparation, grace is God's active involvement in the soul.<sup>553</sup> When detachment prepares the formless intellect as the receptacle for God, God's grace permeates the soul and connects the intellect to the ground.<sup>554</sup>

I argue that Eckhart's understanding of grace is applicable to divine calling, because grace achieves the exact same effect as divine call. They both establish a relationship with God. For Eckhart, grace guides the human soul to return to the ground; likewise, the divine call leads humans to relate to God. As grace activates the soul to receive the divine self-communication, the divine call invites humans to participate in God's self-disclosure. I explicate Eckhart's concept of grace and elaborate on its implication for the divine calling in this section.

Grace is the radiation of God, which is immediate and without medium to the soul.<sup>555</sup> Eckhart argues that only God can bless the soul.<sup>556</sup> Thus, grace is the extension of God's self, which is not created; instead, it flows from God's essence.<sup>557</sup> As such, grace is God's communication of the God's self.<sup>558</sup> Eckhart, therefore, writes, "when grace is perfect, it is not grace, but a divine light in which one sees God."<sup>559</sup> Thus, grace is not an additional property unto the soul. Rather, grace infuses God's nature into the soul.<sup>560</sup> Insofar as grace is God's communication of God's self, grace connects humans to the Godhead.

---

<sup>552</sup> W 318.

<sup>553</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 67.

<sup>554</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 152.

<sup>555</sup> Eckhart's concept of grace is very different from the majority of thinkers in his time, including Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas teaches that grace is external divine energy infused into the human soul. Thus, grace is a created gift; it, therefore, is an accident property to the soul.

<sup>556</sup> W 300.

<sup>557</sup> W 187.

<sup>558</sup> W 230.

<sup>559</sup> W 230.

<sup>560</sup> W 230.

The line for Eckhart between nature and the divine is erased by grace.<sup>561</sup> Eckhart considers himself as inheriting the teaching of deification from the Church Fathers.<sup>562</sup> The Church Fathers teach that God adopts humans as the sons of God by the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Eckhart teaches that grace actualizes the coming of the Holy Spirit who effects sonship within humans.<sup>563</sup> In short, humans inherit divine nature by grace.

According to Davies, there are three significant characteristics of grace for Eckhart.<sup>564</sup> First, grace is entirely sovereign and free from human works.<sup>565</sup> In terms of receiving grace, humans are passive. Second, grace is the self-communication of God, which is the overflow of God's essence; God imparts God's essence through grace.<sup>566</sup> Third, grace sanctifies humans and makes them inherit God's nature.<sup>567</sup> Humans thus receive sonship through grace.<sup>568</sup>

For Eckhart, grace is God's self-communication for sharing God's nature. As such, grace sanctifies humans into sonship, and establishes humans and God relationship. Eckhart's teaching of God communicating God's nature through grace parallels to God inviting humans to participate in God's life in the divine call in this dissertation. I consider that the divine call establishes God and human relationships through God's self-communication. For Eckhart, being the son of God is

---

<sup>561</sup> Eckhart disagrees with Aquinas's well known proposition: grace starts where nature ends. Eckhart teaches that there is no such thing as pure nature. Everything is with God. God is always in creation. For Eckhart, God's act of creation is a continuous action. God never ceases to create, and is always with creation. The creation is always dependent upon God for their existences. Otherwise, creation will become nothingness. Hence, God's act of creation never ends. Eckhart quotes Augustine, "God did not create and depart, but the things that are from him are in him." God is never leave creation alone. Insofar as God is with the creation, there is no pure nature. Thus, the dividing line between nature and grace cannot be drawn. So grace could not be an extension of nature.

<sup>562</sup> Even though Eckhart tries to defend his teaching by quoting the Church Fathers, there are significant deviations between Eckhart and the Church Fathers. First, the Fathers' teaching of deification did not erase the line between creator and creatures. On the contrary, Eckhart's teaching intends to blur the line. Second, the Fathers teach that humans are sons of God by adoption. Nonetheless, Eckhart emphasizes that humans are sons by nature.

<sup>563</sup> W 231.

<sup>564</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 154.

<sup>565</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 154.

<sup>566</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 154.

<sup>567</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 154.

<sup>568</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 146.

not just a noetic title; it is an ontological event happening in the soul. Likewise, I understand that the divine calling into being the sons and daughters of God is not just a noetic title; it inherits transformation in the soul. Now I turn to Eckhart teaching on the birth of the Son, which offers more details about the event occurring in the soul.

### **4.3.3 The Birth of the Son in the Intellect**

The birth of the Son in the intellect is one of the extraordinary teachings of Eckhart, which is Eckhart's way to stipulate the restoration of relationship with God. The birth of the Son in the soul elucidates how God relates to the soul. Intriguingly, it also is the major concern of divine calling. The divine calling becomes effectual when God relates to the soul. I adapt Eckhart's exposition on the birth of the Son to understand the event of God's relating to humans through divine call in this section.

Eckhart's teaching on the birth of the Son subverts the Catholic Church's teaching both theologically and metaphysically. Theologically, the Catholic Church teaches that human beings lose the likeness of God after the Fall.<sup>569</sup> Salvation restores God's likeness so that humans can have a relationship with God. However, Eckhart teaches that humans can only restore their relationship with God through sonship.<sup>570</sup> The birth of the Son in the intellect is the event of restoring sonship; consequently, a person can reunite with God. For Eckhart, there is no merit or divine likeness for restoration. Unless a person participates in God's nature, otherwise she cannot restore the relationship with God.

---

<sup>569</sup> The second century Church Father Irenaeus taught that human beings were original created in God's image and likeness. He distinguished likeness from the image. The image of God is the 'form' of humanity. Human beings still retain the image of God after the fall. Human beings are different from other animals because they are 'formally' like God. However, humans are lost in terms of moral quality; the likeness of God is gone. Many later theologians, e.g., Augustine, followed Irenaeus' proposal and understood that the purpose of salvation is to restore the likeness of God. It later became a formal teaching of the Catholic Church.

<sup>570</sup> W 236.

Metaphysically, the early Church Fathers teach about sonship by adoption; Christians are sons of God through adoption. The division between the creator and creatures remains intact. However, Eckhart teaches that the divine and human nature can assimilate into one another. For Eckhart, God's and human's natures are indeed the same when humans become the sons of God. The sonship results from the infusion of the divine nature. Thus, divine nature and human nature are inseparable.

Eckhart adopts the Aristotelian assimilation of likeness to develop his idea of the birth. The birth of the Son in the intellect is possible only when the intellect and the Son share the same nature.<sup>571</sup> According to Aristotle, an entity can only assimilate into another provided they are of the same nature.<sup>572</sup> Eckhart uses the process of knowledge acquisition to demonstrate the theory of assimilation. In knowledge acquisition, the mind is fused with the object of being known.<sup>573</sup> The mind and the object of being known become one in the act of knowing. Aristotle's argument consists of two axioms. First, the thing of being known has already existed somehow in the knower. Then, the otherness is absorbed by likeness in the process of knowing. In the exposition of *De Anima*, Thomas Aquinas writes, "The truth is that knowledge is caused by the knower containing a likeness of the thing known; for the latter must be in the knower somehow."<sup>574</sup> Insofar as the acting of knowing unites the knower and the known, the knower and the being known share the same form. Consequently, multiplicity breaks down into singularity in the union of knowing. The knower and the being known unite in the operation of knowing.

---

<sup>571</sup> W 310.

<sup>572</sup> C.D.C. Reeve, trans., *Aristotle: De Anima* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2017), 53-54.

<sup>573</sup> W 310.

<sup>574</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, trans. K. Foster et al. (New Haven: Aeterna Press, 1951), book I, ch. 2, lecture 4, n. 43; op. cit., 71.

Eckhart extrapolates Aristotle's theory of assimilation to the event of the birth in the mind. When the soul and God share the same nature, they can assimilate into the others.<sup>575</sup> The operation of one party can share with the other party. For Eckhart, the mind is not just the faculty of knowing; it is the ground of the soul.<sup>576</sup> It is the interior dimension of humans. When the Father engenders the Son in Godhead, the birth of the Son also reflects in the mind.<sup>577</sup> For Eckhart, the ground, Godhead, and the mind all are of the same nature. They unite in the soul. Thus, Eckhart teaches that the mind is where the birth of the Son takes place. Eckhart, therefore, says, "when I'm in Godhead, I am one and the same with Godhead, hence, I am the cause of God."<sup>578</sup> Consequently, sonship is received when the Son is born within the intellect. The intellect and Godhead are one, and they share in the single divine operation of engendering the Son.<sup>579</sup>

It is a mistake if one tries to understand Eckhart's propositions from the materialist perspective. Eckhart understands that the birth does not take place in the created dimension of place and time. The ground denotes the unfathomable depth of transcendent reality within the human soul. When a detached person withdraws herself from the diversified external worlds, she retreats herself into the inner realm of a united transcendent being.<sup>580</sup> In the realm of transcendence, everything directly connects to God. In addition, they all share their natures together.<sup>581</sup>

Transposing Eckhart's insights on divine calling, I propose to understand that the divine calling is a single event occurring in the soul to join God and humans. On the one hand, God endows God's self to the soul. On the other hand, humans also retreat into the deep of the soul to

---

<sup>575</sup> W 133.

<sup>576</sup> W 134.

<sup>577</sup> W 134.

<sup>578</sup> W 134.

<sup>579</sup> W 134.

<sup>580</sup> W 402.

<sup>581</sup> W 402.

connect with the life force, aka the ground. Thus, in the event of divine calling, God and the human encounter in the deep of the soul. In such an encounter, humans and God unite. The operation in God's mind, therefore, is reflected in the human mind. Thus, God and humans can abide with each other through the divine calling.

#### **4.3.4 The Breakthrough**

While the birth of the Son sheds light on the event of divine call that occurs in the soul, the 'breakthrough' can shed light on the experience. Eckhart uses the birth of the Son to depict the passive process of reflecting God's operations in the soul. He uses the term 'breakthrough' to depict the transformative experience. Human beings are passive in the birth process, but the soul becomes productive when it undergoes the breakthrough. Figuratively speaking, the breakthrough is productive because it opens up the soul to connect to everything in the ground. It also denotes the infinite fertility and dynamism when God unites with the soul.<sup>582</sup>

For Eckhart, the breakthrough is the process that the soul steps out of herself to connect to everything in essence.<sup>583</sup> Creaturely boundaries are bound by corporal limitation. However, when a person retreats into the ground, all the creaturely boundaries disappear in the realm of the ground. The soul penetrates and is penetrated by the thing previously limited by boundaries. When things are connected in the ground, they are not just connected externally; they are mutually penetrated. They fuse with the all-embracing oneness.<sup>584</sup> As a result, the soul encounters all things. In other words, breakthrough oversteps boundaries of things so that one finds within herself the ontological core of the cosmos in the breakthrough.<sup>585</sup>

---

<sup>582</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 65.

<sup>583</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 66.

<sup>584</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 73.

<sup>585</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 73.

For Eckhart, multiplicity has to be overcome for ‘real’ connection to things.<sup>586</sup> His solution is to access the oneness in the ground.<sup>587</sup> When a person retreats into the ground, her authentic self will return to the original state. In the original state, the subject becomes nothingness; it is devoid of form and content.<sup>588</sup> As such, she can purely receive objects into herself. Consequently, the boundary of the subject and object disappears.<sup>589</sup> Objects can be included in the subject when the subject becomes empty in the ground. This experience of immersion in totality is precisely the same way as that in which God is totality. This experience of totality swallows up differences and otherness.<sup>590</sup> Oliver Davies summarizes Eckhart’s metaphysical strategy as follows: “The effect of this strategy is to create a kind of metaphysical black-hole into which the ordered structures of the created universe, thinking and language, encountering the very limits of their own createdness, will collapse and vanish.”<sup>591</sup> To sum up, personal boundary breaks down in the breakthrough experience. The person returns to her primal state and realizes the essence of all creatures. She experiences totality and union with other creatures.

#### **4.3.5 The Operative Identity**

According to Eckhart, the soul has a new way of seeing herself after the breakthrough experience; thus, a new identity emerges. Schurmann names the new identity that emerges from the

---

<sup>586</sup> Eckhart teaches that human beings live in a fragmented world in our natural state. The fragmented world implied multiplicity, which distorts the essence of things. Eckhart uses the example wise man to illustrate. A wise man only shares a finite fraction of Wisdom. The original of Wisdom is in God, in whom all the other perfect properties, e.g. goodness, justice are connected. In other words, all the transcendent properties are perfect and united in God. On the contrary, as creatures only ‘borrow’ a finite fashion of transcendent properties from God, they are fragmented and destined to multiplicity.

<sup>587</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 106.

<sup>588</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 107.

<sup>589</sup> Eckhart seems to understand the predicament of metaphysics ahead of Kant. He agrees that the phenomenal world has nothing to do with the essence of things, the noumenal. However, Eckhart proposes a shortcut to overcoming the phenomenal world. He teaches that the subject could directly access the noumenal world through the ground. The ground is a metaphysical backdoor to connect everything back together.

<sup>590</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 107.

<sup>591</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 116.



breakthrough experience ‘operative identity.’<sup>592</sup> I find that the concept of operative identity is helpful to experience the dynamic experience of divine calling. In the following paragraphs, I explicate Eckhart’s idea of operative identity in contrast to the traditional ontological identity.

According to scholastic ontology, an entity inherits a fixed identity because its core is unchangeable. The core is a substance, which contains all changeable attributes as add-on properties. In other words, scholastic metaphysics constructs reality as a fixed substance; thus, the identity is fixed. If the being is static, the divine call is acquired as an add-on to the person. Thus, the traditional view depicts divine call as an external effect, which does not affect the core of being and identity.

Eckhart’s metaphysics is sharply contrasted with scholastic ontology.<sup>593</sup> Eckhart understands the ‘essence’ of being in the ground is not substance but an all-embracing becoming process. The human and God unite together in the deep of the soul. They both participate in the other’s being, so the operation of one accounts for the other. It is the reason why the divine operation of the engendering the Son is also counted as the operation in the human mind. Eckhart says, “Identical is the event as God begets me as himself and begets himself as me.”<sup>594</sup> Because of such union in participation, identity is not fixed but defined by the operation of sharing quality.<sup>595</sup> According to Eckhart, when God penetrates the new self, the attributes of God also apply to the new self. As such, the soul can obtain the transcendent properties, e.g., good, justice, wisdom, directly from God.<sup>596</sup>

---

<sup>592</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 29.

<sup>593</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 103.

<sup>594</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 104.

<sup>595</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 104.

<sup>596</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 104.

I find Eckhart's operational identity is valuable to explain the experience of divine calling. When a person encounters God in the divine call, she acquires a new operative identity. She sees herself as Christ. As Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ." (Philippians 1:21 NRSV) The new identity is symbolic because the identity is not a union of substances. However, the effect of the new self is 'real' because God's operations penetrate it. Furthermore, the person also shares God's quality. Paul writes, "But the *one who is spiritual* discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we *have the mind of Christ.*" (1 Corinthians 2:15-16 NRSV) In my understanding, Paul basically claims that a spiritual person can think as of God's mind. In conclusion, the experience of the divine call introduces a new operative identity. Such identity is not fixed but is sharing God's quality in becoming.

#### **4.3.6 Experience of New Horizon**

I have explained that the divine call introduces God's identity and God's operation in us; as a result, we develop new perspectives to see the world. How will a person re-discover the world after she inherits a new identity? Eckhart's insights on perspective without boundary can help us understand the experience, as I now show.

The breakthrough experience is a subversion of scholastic philosophy. Scholastic philosophy is a system of thought which constructs cognitive understanding as fixed points of reference to interpret experience. However, Eckhart views the truth as dynamic; it is generative. According to Eckhart's view, truth is a new cognitive awareness from experience.<sup>597</sup> In my words, the self is constantly expanding with the 'new horizon' from experience.

---

<sup>597</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 179.

I interpret Eckhart's breakthrough experience in terms of 'new horizon' as following. When a person connects to everything in the ground, she will have a fresh perspective on ordinary experiences. In ordinary experience, we only see things in their effects. They also change over time. As long as the effects are distinct from the essence of things, they separate the knower and the known. However, when a person meets the essence of things in the ground, she accepts things as they are, but not according to their usefulness.<sup>598</sup> In other words, a person does not judge things from her ego-centric perspective but simply accepts whatever discloses to her. She judges objects in the new perspective; objects are known as 'original' and 'new.'

I find Eckhart's teaching is refreshing because it collapses the common-sense notion of knowing through categories and properties. He proposes to know things by their essence, being-in-itself.<sup>599</sup> When a person stays in the ground, the knower and the being known "unite together in love, where there is neither gradation nor hierarchy."<sup>600</sup> Insofar as the intellect meets the essence of things beyond accidents, the knower and the being known meet each other in the 'naked' form.<sup>601</sup>

I interpret that Eckhart's breakthrough experience as if the soul is a still center while all surrounding things move.<sup>602</sup> The soul in the center keeps expanding, while it penetrates the surroundings and also is penetrated by the things around it.<sup>603</sup> In other words, the subjective self keeps expanding by fusing with objects. In the breakthrough experience, one grows with the

---

<sup>598</sup> Heidegger used the term 'ready-to-hand' to depict an attitude of evaluating things according to its usefulness.

<sup>599</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 186.

<sup>600</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 186.

<sup>601</sup> W 143.

<sup>602</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 179.

<sup>603</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 179.

cosmos.<sup>604</sup> The cosmos is included in her, and it keeps growing. She becomes one with the cosmos and expands with the cosmos.

Forman compares the breakthrough experience to the experience of ‘pure consciousness.’<sup>605</sup> Pure consciousness is a mindful state that the mind empties its preoccupations and makes it aware of everything connected. Like a drop of water returning to the sea, a person in pure consciousness feels connections with everything without the subject/object dichotomy. In the experience, the self feels extended to the world, so to speak.

The breakthrough experience for Eckhart is continual as well as permanent.<sup>606</sup> Although the mystic union experiences were prevalent in many mystic writings,<sup>607</sup> Eckhart’s teaching separates him from others by insisting that the experience is not a spontaneous ecstasy. While other mystic writers suggest that the experience of mystic union is temporal and people resume to ‘normal’ afterward, Eckhart teaches that the connection to the ground is a persisting experience. He says that “one seeks inwardly, and stays within.”<sup>608</sup> The experience of connecting to the ground will not go away. It unceasingly spurs new perspectives in everyday experience.

Adapting the insight of the new horizon to the divine call, I claim that a person can have an unceasing experience on the divine call. Such an experience redefines who she is at the core, and also changes her perspective on the things surrounding her. I understand that the divine call is not a temporary exotic experience. Instead, it shapes the perspective of relating to God and the world from the inside. I claim that a person who responds to the divine call no longer clings to a fixed reference point to see the world. Instead, the divine call produces a new cognitive awareness

---

<sup>604</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 180.

<sup>605</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 103.

<sup>606</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 126.

<sup>607</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 111.

<sup>608</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 120.

in her. Her ‘horizon’ also expands when she ‘sympathizes’ with the things related to her. She can see the world outside of her old perspective. New possibilities of relating to the world continuously arise. Hence, a person can discover the world freshly according to the divine call, because she can now see everything new from God’s perspective.

#### **4.4 Living According to the Divine Calling**

I maintain that the calling of God does not stop at bringing about internal transformation or providing a new perspective; it will eventually lead to action. In this section, I employ Eckhart’s insights to explore their implications to orient a way of living according to the divine call.

##### **4.4.1 From Pure Experience to Actions**

Action is a crucial element of the Christian life. Although Eckhart emphasizes being over acting, he does not overlook the importance of actions in Christian life. Eckhart charts out a unique roadmap to transfer the energy of breakthrough experience into actions. In the sermon of Mary and Martha, Eckhart asserts that contemplating and retreating to inner life is a blessing.<sup>609</sup> The Lord praised the contemplative life which Mary symbolized. However, it is just the beginner stage; “Mary has good intention, but she does not move beyond the stage of pure interiority,”<sup>610</sup> Eckhart preached. Martha represents the advanced stage of the spiritual life because she kept active and still connected to the Lord.<sup>611</sup> For Eckhart, Martha is the symbol of active mysticism. She went through silent contemplation that led to actions. According to Eckhart, the test of authentic contemplation is charitable service to those in need.<sup>612</sup>

---

<sup>609</sup> W 56; Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 218.

<sup>610</sup> W 137.

<sup>611</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 221.

<sup>612</sup> Wood, *Meister Eckhart*, 32.

In the line of Eckhart's thinking, I propose that spiritual experience should lead a person to 'act without reason.'<sup>613</sup> For Eckhart, contemplation is a path, which is not the goal. The goal of contemplation is to lead a person into actions, for Eckhart. Thomist ethicists in Eckhart's time also emphasize that spirituality should lead to actions. Thomists insist on thinking 'right,' then a person will act according to the justifiable reason. Nevertheless, Eckhart believes that moral actions should be without why. My interpretation of Eckhart is when a person experiences the breakthrough and stays in the ground, equanimity is the consequence.<sup>614</sup> She feels the 'feel' of other creatures, loves as God loves, and wills as God wills. In my interpretation, Eckhart teaches 'act without reason' because he thinks that actions are 'emanation' from being. A person should not be bound by reason or justification to act. A person should see herself outside of her ego-centric reference and act out of sympathy with others.

Eckhartian ethics undermines the power of will and reason for moral actions. Spiritual rituals do not have much value in Eckhart's thought. Eckhart calls for living in harmony with the Being-itself as the force of actions.<sup>615</sup> For Eckhart, spirituality frees a person from reason and passion so that she can act like God.<sup>616</sup> Flasch points out that according to Eckhart, a spiritual person acts in *apatheia*, serenity, passionlessness.<sup>617</sup> For Eckhart, contemplation can lead a person to be 'free from all prayer.'<sup>618</sup> By contemplation, a person can be freed from any cognitive activity. Eckhart believes that the true reason of action is no reason. He says, "one should act without

---

<sup>613</sup> W 427.

<sup>614</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 72.

<sup>615</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 249.

<sup>616</sup> W 183.

<sup>617</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 249.

<sup>618</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 249.

motion of the soul. Like the hinge pin of the door.”<sup>619</sup> The cognitive activity only provides superficial activities. Instead, pure spiritual activities should not involve passion, reason, or will.

Eckhart proposes that the energy of acting without why is to return to the ground. How can a person act without will, passion, and reason? For Eckhart, the key again is to stay in the ground. In the sermon of Martha and Mary, Eckhart said, “when Martha acts, she acts without reason. She acts but stays still in the ground.”<sup>620</sup> When a person returns to the ground, she withdraws her specific being into universal humanity.<sup>621</sup> When a person retreats to universal humanity, she connects to other creatures as God connects to all creatures. Thus, a new moral disposition is formed when a person withdraws her specific being and retreats into the universal being.<sup>622</sup> She can feel with other creatures, and she is also compassionate and loves all things equally. Consequently, the new universal being supplies the energy of compassion for actions. In other words, Eckhart believes that all spiritual actions should be overflowed from the core of being.

Life is a self-referential performance. It lives without why and God. Eckhart teaches that people have to enter the flow of life to rectify the core of things presented to them. They should learn from Martha, because she did not avoid ‘things;’ instead, she exposed herself to life.<sup>623</sup> When life connects to the ground—i.e., the life source, it is embraced by the totality of reality. Insofar as the totality includes everything without a special designation for God, Eckhart, therefore, insists on living without God.<sup>624</sup> A person just lives so that she can fully embrace both the world and God equally.

---

<sup>619</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 134.

<sup>620</sup> Forman, *Meister Eckhart*, 121.

<sup>621</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 165.

<sup>622</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 167.

<sup>623</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 222.

<sup>624</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 222.

Applying Eckhart's ideas to the theory of the divine calling, I propose that a called person reconciles her living with the core of her being. She accesses the life-giving fullness from within because the fullness is in the ground. She does not need to ask the specific content about the calling of God. Instead, she just lives, and it *is* the calling of God. The mode of living without the need for justifying one's action is the direct expression of fulfilling God's call.

#### **4.4.2 The Plasticity of the Soul**

When the divine call guides the soul connecting to God, the soul is freed from preconditions of the world. She can become whatever reality is revealed to her. Eckhart promotes that the soul is not a fixed entity. It is dynamic and flexible. Thus, the soul becomes what it is after. His favorite example is justice. He writes, "someone loves justice so much becomes justice."<sup>625</sup> Eckhart believes that existence can be an intentional activity. Humans can become what they decide beyond physical and psychological limitations, as long as the soul connects with what it seeks, knows, and loves.<sup>626</sup>

Hence, the old self must replace the new self in God to live the fullness of life. Eckhart preached, "the I is what first gives objects their values. Everything we yearn for is our self-built world. Because it is you who gives value to all things, you hinder yourself when the things hinder you."<sup>627</sup> On the contrary, when the self is replaced by God, the person will receive the value of thing as is, because all things in God are in their true and 'naked' form.<sup>628</sup> Thus, the soul will be freed from the precondition of the world. In conclusion, the soul is possible to be shaped by the truth of reality when it connects to God. When a person heeds the divine call, she returns to the

---

<sup>625</sup> W 328; Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 35.

<sup>626</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 43.

<sup>627</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 53.

<sup>628</sup> W 318.



origin of her plastic nature of the soul. She can elude the burden of worldly preconditions and pursue whatever way of living God opens to her.

#### **4.4.3 The Mystic Way of Living**

The divine calling in the Eckhartian sense urges the person to return to God in every moment. For Eckhart, creatureliness is nothingness. Its existence depends upon the presence of God. Creatures need to always connect to the ground and live in God.

The way of living in God is to retreat to the interior. Flasch points out that Eckhart is a strong proponent of immanentism.<sup>629</sup> He believes that the true Being, i.e., the essence, is present within every individual.<sup>630</sup> One does not need to seek anything essential externally. All the virtues are not ‘made’ but born in us.<sup>631</sup> We need to connect to them from within.<sup>632</sup> Whatever spiritual progress a person obtains, it is by returning to the original. Eckhart understands that the operations of God in the soul are very different from what Aquinas claimed. For Aquinas, God is an efficient cause in the life of the soul. God as the efficient cause means God acts upon the soul, so that God’s energy is external to the soul. Eckhart obviates the idea of efficient cause in the soul because the efficient cause means outside and distinction.<sup>633</sup> He proposes that God is the indwelling principle.<sup>634</sup> When a person connects to the ground, she retreats into the innermost interior. In that interior, she unites with the ground all the time. In the ground, there is no distinction between knowing and acting, or theory and practice.

---

<sup>629</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 278.

<sup>630</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 133.

<sup>631</sup> W 129.

<sup>632</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 219. W 165.

<sup>633</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 278.

<sup>634</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 278.

Eckhart uses the term ‘releasement’ to describe the stages of unceasingly staying in the ground.<sup>635</sup> Schurmann points out that people have to go through the four transformative stages to reach releasement.<sup>636</sup> According to Schurmann, Eckhart has specific instructions to his followers in each stage.<sup>637</sup> His instructions can also guide us in seeking the experience of divine calling. In the first stage, the person has to voluntarily empty things or images that preoccupy her and seek God’s will.<sup>638</sup> Second, she has to deny her individuality and let the Son be born inside her.<sup>639</sup> The denial of individuality includes denying one’s self, will and desires, and disclosing herself to nothingness. Then the Son inside her connects her to all other beings. Third, the difference between the created and the uncreated will be put to an end.<sup>640</sup> She lets God’s mind and the divine will infuse her mind in this stage. She is released from her old creaturely mode of living. She sees things through God’s vision and will as God’s will. Finally, she simply lives the way of the ground.<sup>641</sup> In the final stage, being and nothingness are the same. Her fixed self disappears and becomes a compassionate self to love God and all creatures equally. She just lives without seeking any reason or justification.

Although Eckhart outlines the stages of soul transformation, he opposes specific methods or means to seek God. He said, “for whoever seeks God in a special way gets the way but misses God, who lies hidden in it.”<sup>642</sup> Hence, Eckhart downplays the role of religious rituals or ceremonies. He does not believe that humans can find God. Instead, he insists that when a person loves God,

---

<sup>635</sup> W 133-136.

<sup>636</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 206. I’m indebted to Schurmann’s excellent summary on Eckhart’s teaching on releasement. The following content in this paragraph is an adaptation of this summary on divine calling.

<sup>637</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 206.

<sup>638</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 206.

<sup>639</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 206.

<sup>640</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 206.

<sup>641</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 206.

<sup>642</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 171.

God will come to her.<sup>643</sup> He, therefore, adds, “whoever seeks God without any special way gets Him as He is in Himself.”<sup>644</sup> For Eckhart, seeking God without a means is to see the nakedness of God.<sup>645</sup> Eckhart believes that God can approach a person, who stripped away all will, imageries, and concepts of God, without an intermediary.

Although Eckhart outlines the stages of soul transformation, he opposes specific methods or means to seek God. I suggest that Christians do not expect any fixed way of heeding the divine call. There is no fixed method or religious rituals to enhance the divine calling. One simply has faith that God dwells in her; then God will draw her forward in becoming God’s likeness.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

I have argued that staying in the ground for Eckhart coincides with the result of the divine call. Both transform humans to live in accord with God. I also insist that the divine call leads humans to connect to God. It is similar to retreat into the ground for Eckhart. The experience of the union in the ground helps us understand the experience of divine calling where we acquire a new operative identity and an open boundary self that genuinely cares for others as God cares.

I have shown that according to the Eckhartian framework, attached to this material world is the main obstacle of experiencing God. Thus, heeding divine call starts with getting away from the trivialities of this world. When we retreat in the deep of our souls, God will meet us there. God relates God’s nature to us when God meets us in the soul. In other words, the divine call does not establish external relations but leads us to union with God by participating in God’s own life.

I have also shown that, according to Eckhart’s theology, God’s experience transfers to us when we unite with God in the deep of our souls. I extend this idea to the experience of the divine

---

<sup>643</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 171.

<sup>644</sup> Joel F. Harrington, *Dangerous Mystic: Meister Eckhart’s Path to the God within* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), 205.

<sup>645</sup> W 318.

call. The experience of divine call leads us to ‘feel’ the world as God does. Thus, we do not cling to a fixed ego-centric point of reference to see the world. The divine call produces a new cognitive awareness in us. Our ‘horizon’ expands; we see the world from God’s perspective.

According to Eckhart, life is a self-referential performance. He teaches that we should ‘act without reason.’ I extend his teaching on the living attitude of the called people. A person who heeds to live according to the divine call does not need to ask the specific content about the divine call. Instead, she just lives, and believes that living *is* the calling of God. She reconciles her living with the core of her being. She lives and does not need any justification for actions. She accesses the life-giving fullness from within and assures that she connects with God every moment.

I apply Eckhart’s negative way of knowing God and maintain that we do not expect any fixed way of heeding the divine call. There is no fixed method or religious rituals to enhance the divine calling. We simply believe God will come to us and abide in us. When the divine call guides the soul connecting to God, the soul is freed from preconditions of the world. She can become whatever reality is revealed to her.

Eckhart’s teaching opens the horizon for us to see God, the world, and the self in a whole new way. He urges us to become, instead of being bound by the fixed identity. The experience of divine call destabilizes our fixed identity in the world. It pushes us to heed our origin, open up new horizons, and heed to be synchronized with God in our new identity with God.

## **Chapter 5 - Construct a Theology of Divine Calling**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This dissertation claims that the divine calling is considered a multifaceted reality. It includes God, humans, the content of the call, and the interaction between God and humans. The theory of divine call embraces a wide range of data: theology, anthropology, metaphysical considerations, subjective experience. Hence, I suggest examining the reality of divine calling from multiple perspectives.

I coin the term ‘theologian form’ to denote the perspective in theology that embodies the unique concern and framework to formulate questions and answers. As concern and context shape the theological form, it becomes a two-edged sword. On the negative side, it binds a theology to its blindspot. Some answers are predetermined by the way questions are framed. Some questions can never be asked in a particular form. On the bright side, unique insights can arise because of the particular form.

As divine calling is considered a multifaceted reality, I propose to study it by cross-examining multiple perspectives. I selected three very different theologians/philosophers for this dissertation: Karl Barth, A. N. Whitehead, and Meister Eckhart. They are respected representatives of three distinctive theological forms. Karl Barth is a modern theologian who strongly opposed associating theology with anthropology. He proposed to construct theology solely from revelation. On the other end of the spectrum, A. N. Whitehead is a twentieth-century English philosopher who subordinated the concept of God under his speculative philosophical framework. Meister Eckhart is a medieval mystic and theologian who preceded the European enlightenment. He constructed philosophy and theology based on his experience of mystic union. The three thinkers are very different, and their systems are incompatible with each other. Although their theological systems

are incompatible, I borrow the insights stipulated from their respective theological forms and use them as building blocks to construct a theory in response to our current contexts and concerns.

In the last three chapters, I have explicated the three thinkers' insights related to divine calling. Karl Barth's revelational form offers the perspective to see the salvation history of Jesus Christ as the theological foundation of the divine call. A. N. Whitehead's metaphysical form offers the philosophical framework to explore the ontological mechanism of divine calling. Meister Eckhart's experiential form offers the perspective to see the mystical experience of divine calling. This chapter will integrate their insights to construct a theology of divine calling. I argue that the divine calling is God's salvific action to establish ontological relation between God's self and humans, whereby the self-communication of God induces the transfiguration of identity in humans.

In this chapter, I first review the related insights from the three thinkers. Then, I construct a theology of divine calling. The theology of divine calling will be stipulated in different layers. First, I expound on the nature of divine calling as event. Next, I explicate the divine-human interaction as a divine cycle: a cycle from divine initiation to the incorporation of human responses. Then, I elucidate on the experience of the divine calling in terms of identity transfiguration. Finally, I point out the implications of this project.

## **5.2 Karl Barth: The Theological Foundation of Divine Calling**

In this section, I review the insights from Karl Barth's revelational form. His theology sets the premise of revelation based on the salvation history of Jesus Christ. It is the theological foundation to explain how the triune self of sovereign Lord relates to humans, and humans also are restored to true humanity in the divine call.

### 5.2.1 The Objectivity of Divine Call

As Barth argues that the revelation is the objective action of God in history,<sup>646</sup> I extend Barth's claim and maintain that the divine calling is objective too. For Barth, revelation is the *kerygma*.<sup>647</sup> I claim that Barth's *kerygmatic* concept matches the divine call profile where both call humans and elicit responses. Thus, I argue that the features of *kerygma* also are applicable to the divine call. The divine call, like *kerygma*, presents in human media, involves the whole person, and elicits responses.<sup>648</sup> The divine call, like *kerygma*, uses the imperfect human media to represent the reality of God. Although the representation in human language is imperfect, it can still be objective, in Barth's terms, because it refers to the concrete address in the personal encounter. The self-disclosing action of God guarantees the knowable and intelligible of God's truth for us. In the moment of divine call, human language can transcend beyond its inherited capacity to carry the objective reality of God.

The divine call, as I understand it, transports divine reality into human subjectivity. Barth proposed a pneumatological mediation principle to explain how divine reality transports into human subjectivity. For Barth, Holy Spirit is a divine assurance to mediate divine reality to humans. The Holy Spirit temporarily breaks the divine-human barrier to mediate the objective divine knowledge to human subjectivity.<sup>649</sup> With the mediation of the Holy Spirit, human subjectivity and divine reality unite; but these two are still distinguishable. As a result, Christian experience is the participation of divine reality. Barth provides an insightful proposal that Holy Spirit communicates contents and actualizes the very divine reality inside humans. Using his

---

<sup>646</sup> CD I/1, 348.

<sup>647</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 45.

<sup>648</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 45-46.

<sup>649</sup> Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 26.

pneumatological principle, I claim that the reality of divine call can become human subjectivity through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.

### **5.2.2 The Divine Calling Reveals God's Being is in Relating**

Barth's joined the economy and immanence of God in the exposition on God's being in acting.<sup>650</sup> His exposition can help us understand God's acting pattern in the divine call. Barth proposed that God is always in the active relations of love and freedom. The acting of God in love and freedom not only constitutes God's self-relationship within Trinity, but also constitutes all relationships to creations. The being and acting of God are the same.<sup>651</sup>

Barth conceived that God's being consists in the dynamic movement of the Trinity. Humans experience God's work reflected God's trinitarian pattern: the Father is the originator, the Son is the objectivity of encounter, and the Spirit is the effect in human subjectivity.<sup>652</sup> I apply Barth's trinitarian pattern to divine calling, we experience the summon from the Father (source) to follow the steps of the Son (content) in the power of the Holy Spirit (effect). I, therefore, claim that the three persons of Trinity differentiate their roles to call us, yet they unite to complete one divine calling.

As Barth claimed that the salvation history of Jesus Christ in election predicates all divine-human interaction in general,<sup>653</sup> I claim that the many features of the election are applicable to the divine calling in particular. For Barth, the salvation history shows God's love *for* humanity, *with* humanity, and *in* humanity because of God's commitment to incorporate humanity into God's self. Moreover, the elected man Jesus shows us that humanity is destined to live for God and for

---

<sup>650</sup> CD I/1, 333.

<sup>651</sup> CD I/1, 30.

<sup>652</sup> Johnson, *The Mystery of God*, 51.

<sup>653</sup> CD II/2, 159.



neighbors. I concur with Barth that the divine calling shows God's love to us. It also summons us to follow Jesus' steps to live for God and neighbors.

God relates not only to humanity in general in salvation history but also to us in actual history, for Barth. God's self-relating act is an event.<sup>654</sup> Event occurs concretely within history in the nexus of relations according to Barth. Whatever happens in the time-space continuum, it is not isolated. Instead, it relates to another cluster of events. When God acts in events, God's action also evokes our responses, either in a positive or negative way, in history.

For Barth, God's self-identity is preserved in revelation in history. God relates God's whole being in God's acting in history. Insofar as God's entire being relates in history, God who acts in history is the same God in aseity and eternity.<sup>655</sup> To continue this line of thought, I assure that the God who calls us in history is the same God who initiates the eternal divine call, even though the divine call occurs in the time-space continuum.

### **5.2.3 The Divine Call Awakes the Search for True Humanity**

For Barth, the encounter of God will subvert our understanding of human identity and reveal the true identity in Christ. Humans are defined as human because they are in relation to God. Barth sets forth his *analogia relationis* to elaborate on human identity.<sup>656</sup> Being human is defined by relations. Humans are the bearers of the image of God because they stand before God; thus, they reflect God's image.

I understand that Barth's stipulation of encounter is applicable to divine calling. It is because the divine call is *kerygma* which inherits the character of personal encounter. Applying Barth's personal encounter insights to divine call, God's call urges us to search for a new identity

---

<sup>654</sup> CD II/1, 51-53.

<sup>655</sup> CD II/1, 51-53.

<sup>656</sup> CD I/2, 144-145.

in the encounter. It also invites us to participate in the dynamic relations that reconstitute our personhoods. When we obey God's call, our relationships with God and with neighbors are restored by participating in Jesus' humanity. The sovereignty of God demands us to obey and serve neighbors. In conclusion, a person responding to the divine call is no longer a being-by-herself to live for herself, but a being-in-relation to live for God and *others*.<sup>657</sup>

#### **5.2.4 The Divine Call is Salvation**

Barth's insights of divine encounter inspire us to conclude that the divine call is not just objective content or subjective experience, but it transcends both to relate the whole person to the triune God. I therefore claim that the divine call invites us to participate in the divine life. Hence, it is salvific. Simply put, the divine call is salvation.

Barth understood that salvation starts from God's goodwill toward a person and accomplishes with the corresponding human response. It essentially embraces the whole spectrum of the Christian life. For Barth, the three important elements of salvation relate to three aspects of divine calling: justification is the actualization of God's concrete calling in history; sanctification is the eschatological fulfillment of the divine call; mission is subjective participation of divine calling.

In conclusion, Barth claimed that the divine calling is a mystery and a miracle followed the primary mystery and miracle of the incarnation. It is a mystery; thus, we cannot fully comprehend and exhaustively explain it in human terms. It is a miracle because it is impossible without the divine gift.

---

<sup>657</sup> See Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 31.

### **5.3 A. N. Whitehead: the Ontological Structure and Mechanism of Divine Calling**

In this section, I review the insights from A. N. Whitehead's metaphysical form. Insofar as the divine calling concerns the interaction between God and humans, Whitehead's process philosophy offers a unique perspective to understand how God's persuasion mechanism, which is embedded in the metaphysical structure of every existence, functions in humans and feedbacks to God.

#### **5.3.1 Divine Calling and The Theory of God**

For Whitehead, God's relation to the world is both giving and receiving. God is both transcendent and immanently involved with the world at the same time.<sup>658</sup> In light of Whitehead's stipulation of God's nature, I propose to see the relationship between God, the caller, and the human, the being called, is bilateral. God is both giving and receiving when God calls the world. Humans receive guidance, direction, motivation, and empowerment from God's transcendental provision on the giving side. God also connects to the called person and embraces her into God's life on the receiving side. Thus, God evolves by incorporating the person into God's self. The dipolar nature of God provides a metaphysical framework for us to understand the giving and receiving relationship between God and humans.

##### **5.3.1.1 The Primordial Nature**

In the giving side of divine-human interaction, Whitehead proposed that there is God's primordial nature. God is the source of novelty for the world. As the primordial nature is the foundation of novelty, I infer that God calls to inspire creativity. God's calling is an inspiration to urge us to reach our higher potentials.

Whitehead's idea of primordial nature has two implications on the divine calling. First, God provides the vision to the world. To me, the vision God conveys to creation is the divine call.

---

<sup>658</sup> PR 345.

Thus, I say, God calls the world so that the world is lured to fulfill God's vision. Second, the world as a whole reflects God's primordial preference. While the existing world is the product of all processes, it reflects the sum of God's preference in every individual process. In Whitehead's framework, the world effectually fulfills the calling from God.

### **5.3.1.2 Initial Aim**

Whitehead's concept of initial aim is critical for us to understand divine calling. It explains how God communicates God's vision to the world. For Whitehead, every concreting process is a self-initiated process. God communicates God's vision through the initial aim. In my understanding, the initial aim is the actual divine call. In the initial stage of concreting, the initial aim, aka divine call, plays the role of directing the 'appetite' of the concreting process.<sup>659</sup> God uses the initial aim to lure the world to strive towards God's vision of order, beauty, and goodness.<sup>660</sup>

For Whitehead, the initial aim also plays a crucial role in the origin of sustaining subjectivity. A moment of subjectivity arises and perishes along with each concreting process, according to Whitehead. In order to maintain a sustaining 'living' subjectivity across time, there must be a transcendent referential point to guide each concreting process. For Whitehead, God's primordial nature is the transcendent reference, and the initial aim is the carrier to guide each process to maintain continuity. When God provides transcendent reference via the initial aim, it is the guiding force of subjectivity. As a result, the universe can promote the emergence of ever more intense forms of subjective experience.<sup>661</sup>

Whitehead's idea of initial aim explains how divine calling can be actualized from the philosophical point of view. The initial aim becomes the media to communicate God's vision

---

<sup>659</sup> PR 239.

<sup>660</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 252.

<sup>661</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 168.

inside humans. In other words, the initial aim is the actual divine call. It communicates not through external means but intrinsic persuasion. Moreover, the initial aim, aka divine call, becomes the foundation of human subjectivity. Humans can experience consistent subjectivity because the divine call is consistent inside them.

### **5.3.1.3 Consequent Nature**

For Whitehead, God has a receiving end in the divine-human interaction, which is the consequent nature of God. The consequent nature of God is God's self-actualization from the world. According to Whitehead, when the world concretizes God's vision, God obtains satisfaction. Furthermore, when God incorporates the world into Godself, the world experience becomes God's experience.<sup>662</sup> For Whitehead, God can feel the world's most in-depth experiences.<sup>663</sup>

When I transpose the consequent nature concept to divine calling, God receives humans into God's life through calling. God also changes, corresponding to the responses from humans. God's satisfaction depends upon how humans respond to the call. Thus, the divine call links the fates of the divine caller and being called together. Their paths intertwine together to fulfill their own destinies. The fulfillment of the call satisfies both humans and God as well. The call is not just an external affair on acting, but defines God's becoming. God sympathizes with all the world processes. God suffers together with humans when human responds to the divine calling negatively. Conversely, God grows together with humans when they respond to the divine calling positively.

For Whitehead, God harmonizes and 're-orders' the world processes according to God's ideal vision in God's self. Every temporal occasion, therefore, is transformed into an 'everlasting' element in God's experience.<sup>664</sup> The world's ultimate meaning and purposes will emerge when all

---

<sup>662</sup> PR 345.

<sup>663</sup> PR 345.

<sup>664</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 195.

the world's processes become perfectly harmonious within God. Whitehead called that is God's salvation to the world.<sup>665</sup>

Whitehead's proposal of salvation through unification into God could be a valuable insight to understand divine calling. I translate Whitehead's idea in divine calling as follows. While God does not coerce the divine calling upon humans, humans could rebel against the divine call and fall shorts of their purposes and full potentials. However, divine calling never fails. When humans are entirely accepted by God even though they fail, they find new meaning and harmony again in God. The idea of final integration with God guarantees that God's calling is effectual. God will redeem all processes eventually in God's self according to God's vision so that all the processes will fulfill their callings either in the world or ultimately in God.

### **5.3.2 Humans and Divine Calling**

According to Whitehead, personhood is relatedness. It can enrich our understanding of divine calling. The relationship with others constitutes who a person is. When the nexus of events are mutually related to each other and unifies themselves in decision and integration, the unified subjectivity emerges, and personal identity develops. For Whitehead, there is no internal principle or established structure to define personhood. Personal identification is just solidified pattern or style in relation.<sup>666</sup>

How can God call a person? Applying Whitehead's framework, I formulate that God calls no individual because God does not call humans specifically. God's initial aim is shared with every concurring process. There is no innate structure or faculty inside humans, which makes humans distinctly called by God. However, as personhood develops through cumulative habit, a person becomes an acute listener to God's call when she develops a habit to follow God's calling across

---

<sup>665</sup> PR 345.

<sup>666</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 102.

the time. In other words, when a person develops the habitual positive response to God's calling/vision according to the initial aim, she lives in tune with God's call. Thus, the divine call actualizes in her. When a person develops the habit of relating to God, she becomes a person-called-by-God.

Whitehead believed that God is involved in all experiences in the world. For Whitehead, religious intuition is not an exceptional vision or out-of-this-world experience. It is the feeling and discernment inherent in our pre-thematic intuition.<sup>667</sup> As such, I claim that God's calling is pervasive. It permeates every conscious and subconscious experience and decision. Moreover, the divine call is like a coordinated web of many interwoven events so that the holistic divine plan can simultaneously inspire different subjects.

Inspired by Whitehead's cosmology, there are four distinctive features of the divine call. First, God's calling is persuasive rather than coercive. Second, there exist transcendent reference points which are necessary conditions for occasions to evolve. The initial aim, values, and potentials are instances of transcendent reference points. God's calling is the foundation of the transcendent reference points. Third, the divine call influences the evolution of subject. As subject is relational, God's act through the initial aim opens and limits what relations are available in each concrescence.<sup>668</sup> Fourth, the divine call is the blueprint guiding the world to achieve a greater intensity of order, beauty, and goodness. The goal of divine calling is to guide humans to reach their full potentials. Humans can only reach maximum enjoyment when they follow God's calling. When a person positively responds to the divine calling, her will and God's vision coincide.

---

<sup>667</sup> Whitehead, *Religion in Making*, 48.

<sup>668</sup> Faber, *God as Poet of the World*, 97.

## **5.4 Meister Eckhart: the Mystical Experience of Divine Calling**

In this section, I review the insights from Meister Eckhart's experiential form. Eckhart's theology of the ground depicts how the soul transforms in the human-divine union. I argue that the experience of the ground is equivalent to the experience of divine calling. For Eckhart, retreating to the ground is the way to reconnect to God, which is parallel to the divine call that leads humans to have a relationship with God. I propose to adopt Eckhart's insights to understand the experience of divine calling as emergent of an open boundary self. The experience leads humans to care genuinely for others as God cares.

### **5.4.1 The Theology from Experience**

For Eckhart, the initial phase of spiritual awakening is detachment. The path of detachment is a path of negation. It frees a person from predefined ideas, and then she can receive a new perspective to see things according to God. For Eckhart, detachment is the path to prepare a person to connect to the ground. A detached person is freed from the distractions of the phenomenal world.

Eckhart's teaching on detachment not only is indicative but also is imperative. His teaching showed us how to make ourselves available to receive God's calling. Inspired by Eckhart's teaching on detachment, I understand that the journey of divine call starts with negation. One needs to clear out the predefined ideas on God, self, and the world. She also needs to detach from the external distractions and heeds God's call from the inside. Then, grace will guide her soul to return to the ground.

I argue that the work of grace for Eckhart is equivalent to the work of divine call in this dissertation. Grace guides the soul to the ground; in parallel, the divine call leads humans to relate



to God.<sup>669</sup> As grace activates the soul to receive the divine self-communication, I argue that the divine call also invites humans to participate in God's self-disclosure.

I consider that Eckhart's teaching of God communicating God's nature through grace parallels God inviting humans to participate in God's life in the divine call. For Eckhart, being the son of God is not just a noetic title; it is an ontological event happening in the soul. Likewise, I understand that being called to be the sons and daughters of God is not just a noetic title; it inherits transformation in the soul. Eckhart's teaching on the birth of the Son offers us more details about the event occurring in the soul.

#### **5.4.1.1 The Birth of the Son in the Intellect**

The birth of the Son in the intellect is Eckhart's way to stipulate the restoration of relationship with God. Eckhart understood that the birth does not take place in the created dimension of place and time. It only happens in the unfathomable depth of transcendent reality within the human soul.<sup>670</sup> When the Father engenders the Son in Godhead, the birth of the Son also reflects in the mind.<sup>671</sup> For Eckhart, the ground, Godhead, and the mind are of the same nature. They unite in the soul. The intellect and Godhead are one when they share in the single divine operation of engendering the Son.

Transposing Eckhart's insights on divine calling, I claim that the divine calling is a single event occurring in the soul to join God and humans. On the one hand, God bestows God's self to the soul. On the other hand, humans also retreat into the deep of the soul to connect to God. In the event of divine calling, God and the human encounter in the deep of the soul. In such an encounter, humans and God unite. Thus, God and humans can abide with each other through the divine calling.

---

<sup>669</sup> W 230.

<sup>670</sup> W 402.

<sup>671</sup> W 134.

### **5.4.1.2 The Breakthrough**

While the birth of the Son sheds light on the event of divine call that occurs in the soul, the ‘breakthrough’ can shed light on the experience of the divine call. For Eckhart, the breakthrough is the process that the soul steps out of herself to connect to everything in essence. When a person retreats into the ground, all the creaturely boundaries disappear in the realm of the ground according to Eckhart. One finds within herself the ontological core of the cosmos in the breakthrough. Eckhart’s metaphysical strategy is accurately summarized by Oliver Davies, “The effect of this strategy is to create a kind of metaphysical black-hole into which the ordered structures of the created universe, thinking and language, encountering the very limits of their own createdness, will collapse and vanish.”<sup>672</sup> In plain language, when a person is in the ground, the structure of opposition and multiplicity is abolished; she can connect to everything in its essence.

After the breakthrough experience, the soul has a new way of seeing herself according to Eckhart; a new operative identity emerges. Eckhart’s explained that as the divine operation joins God and humans, God and humans unite in participation. Humans inherit a new operative identity as god, which is the closest identification to God but different from God. Moreover, when the person unites with God, God penetrates the self. Thus, God’s experience transfers to the self beyond creature limitation.

### **5.4.1.3 Experience of New Horizon**

According to Eckhart, when humans identify with God and share God’s experiences through the breakthrough experience, humans see the world from a new perspective. I interpret that the self is constantly expanding with the ‘new horizon’ from the breakthrough experience. In ordinary experience, humans only see things in their effects. However, Eckhart’s teaching collapses the

---

<sup>672</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 116.

common-sense notion of knowing through categories and properties. He proposed to know things by their essence. When a person meets the essence of things in the ground, she will not judge things from her ego-centric perspective but simply accepts whatever discloses to her. Thus, things are known as 'original' and 'new.' According to Eckhart, the experience is not a spontaneous ecstasy. It unceasingly spurs new perspectives in everyday experience.

In light of the new horizon, I claim that the experience of divine call shapes the perspective of relating to God and the world from the inside. A person who responds to the divine call no longer clings to a fixed reference point to see the world. Instead, her 'horizon' also expands when she 'sympathizes' with the things related to her. New possibilities of relating to the world continuously arise. Hence, I claim that a person can discover the world freshly according to the divine call because she can now see everything new from God's perspective.

#### **5.4.2 Living According to the Divine Calling**

I understand that the calling of God leads to action. Eckhart believed spiritual experience should lead a person to 'act without reason.'<sup>673</sup> For Eckhart, when a person experiences the breakthrough and stays in the ground, equanimity is the consequence.<sup>674</sup> In my interpretation of Eckhart, 'act without reason' is that one acts without bound by thinking according to one's ego-centric reference; instead, she acts out of sympathy with others.

Eckhart proposed that the energy of acting without why is to return to the ground. When a person returns to the ground, she connects to other creatures as God connects to all creatures, so she withdraws her specific being into universal humanity.<sup>675</sup> A new moral disposition is formed

---

<sup>673</sup> W 427.

<sup>674</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 72.

<sup>675</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 165.

when a person restores to the universal being.<sup>676</sup> She is compassionate and loves all things equally. Consequently, the new universal being acts out of genuine compassion.

Applying Eckhart's ideas to the theory of the divine calling, I propose that a called person reconciles her living with the core of her being. She returns to the origin of her plastic nature of the soul. She can elude the burden of worldly preconditions and pursue whatever way of living God opens to her. She does not need to ask the specific content regarding the calling of God. Instead, she just lives, and her living is the calling of God. The mode of living without the need to justify one's action is the direct expression of fulfilling God's call.

Although Eckhart outlines the stages of soul transformation, he opposed specific methods or means to seek God. Likewise, I suggest that Christians do not expect any fixed way of heeding the divine call. There is no fixed method or religious rituals to enhance the divine calling. We simply have faith that God will draw us forward in becoming God's likeness when we prepare by detaching from the external distractions.

## **5.5 Divine Calling is Event**

After reviewing the insights of the three thinkers, I found one agreement among them: the divine-human interaction is event. My definition of event is a process, which denotes a nexus of relations. It invokes actions and becomings among the involving parties. Although the details vary, all three thinkers reject a fixed and substantive notion of being. They insist that beings continuously evolve. In other words, being is in becoming.<sup>677</sup> When they formulate the divine-human interaction as an event, they emphasize different aspects of event.

---

<sup>676</sup> Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 167.

<sup>677</sup> Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming*.

### **5.5.1 Barth: Divine Calling is God's Giving Process in History**

For Barth, divine calling is God's giving process in history.<sup>678</sup> Barth's motto is: humans cannot know God until God takes the initiation to reveal God's self.<sup>679</sup> Moreover, when God determines to relate to humans, it happens as an event. Barth understood that event is a nexus of relations that concretely occurs in the time-space continuum.<sup>680</sup> For Barth, history is the stage for God's action. Humans encounter and respond to God in history.

For Barth, God is a transcendent Lord. When God relates God's self in history, God always reveals through a container. The container is the medium of event; it also is the 'veil' that enables humans to relate to the entirety of the transcendent God. To sum up, Barth emphasized event is God's interaction in history, which always appears in containers.

Barth's view of event points out three features relevant to divine calling. First, the divine calling is God's giving process. God condenses to relate God's self to humans; otherwise, humans cannot know God. Second, God contributes God's entire self in the process. Barth elaborated how God relates God's entire self to humans in his discussion of trinitarian patterns (section 2.4.1). He insisted that all three persons in the triune God participate and take the unique role to complete the event of revelation. Third, the event occurs in concrete history and always mediate through earthly container. The divine message is always addressed in the nexus of the time-space continuum, and it is inseparable from its human container (section 2.4.3).

### **5.5.2 Whitehead: Divine Calling is a Perpetual Constituting Process**

For Whitehead, an event is a perpetual constituting process. Whitehead's metaphysics provides a clue of how an event operates. For Whitehead, event is relational. There is no fixed substance in

---

<sup>678</sup> CD I/2, 25-27.

<sup>679</sup> CD I/1, 333-347

<sup>680</sup> CD II/1, 52.

the composition of reality; each process is in relation to other processes. Moreover, the event is open and dynamic. It is open because there is no boundary in the interaction between processes. It is dynamic because the process of evolving never stops.

Whitehead's understanding of event is the foundation for mutual penetration mechanism.<sup>681</sup> In the mutual penetration process, object and subject emerge alternatively (section 3.2.3). A current subject integrates all objects for its constitution. Then, it perishes and becomes an object. Eventually, it will be consumed by a successive subject too. The concept of mutual penetration is helpful to understand divine calling. Both God and humans can maintain their own subjectivity and incorporate others into themselves for their evolutions. In this process, God and humans can perpetually influence each other. Both parties depend on the other to contribute to their own becoming. Whitehead's idea of event helps us understand the reciprocal intertwining of human and divine in becoming. I will elaborate more on the mutual influencing aspect of divine calling in the later section.

### **5.5.3 Eckhart: Divine Calling is Union in Participation**

For Eckhart, an event is a union in participation. Eckhart understood that the boundaries of God and humans are dissolved in the event of participation. Consequently, there is no difference between superiority and subordination in the event.<sup>682</sup> The otherness also vanishes. The inner being of humans connects directly to the inner life of God.

For Eckhart, when God and humans perfectly participate in each other, humans become the perfect image of God, and they become god so to speak (section 4.3.5).<sup>683</sup> In the union of

---

<sup>681</sup> PR 208.

<sup>682</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 159.

<sup>683</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 78.

participation, the divine and the human become one yet maintain their individuality. There is no superiority or subordination between each other because they are in total synchronization.

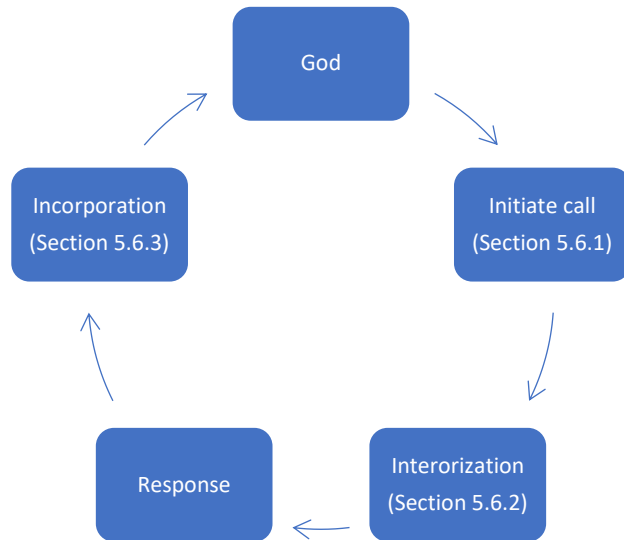
The three aspects of event from three thinkers are complementary to each other in understanding the divine calling. According to Barth, event happens in concrete history. Barth's perspective defines the stage of divine calling. Thus, divine calling is not speculation or abstract idea; instead, it is 'real' happening in history. According to Whitehead, event is a perpetual constitution process. Whitehead's perspective denotes the ever-changing nature of divine calling. Divine calling is not a one-time occurrence; it develops continuously in relating both God and humans. According to Eckhart, event is the process of union in participation. Eckhart's perspective highlights that the event of divine calling produces perfect synchronization between God and humans in experience. When God and humans unite in participation, one experience can share with the other.

## **5.6 The Divine Cycle of Calling**

I propose that the divine call is the interactive event between God and humans; it can be described from the divine and human sides. Let me first explicate the event of divine call from the divine side. I found that Eckhart's framework of Godhead's becoming is valuable for understanding the dynamic nature of divine calling. Eckhart taught that Godhead becomes God and God returns to Godhead, whereby God brings the creations to Godhead in the becoming process.<sup>684</sup> Adopting Eckhart's framework on the divine calling, God is in motion in a becoming cycle: God initiates divine call, then relates the call to humans and evokes responses; eventually, God embraces human responses into God's self.

---

<sup>684</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 183.



### 5.6.1 God is the Initiator of the Divine Call

First, God initiates the divine call. The three thinkers proposed three aspects of God's initiation of the divine call. Let me explain their emphases in turn.

Barth emphasized that God calls people because of God's sovereign love. The central theme of Barth's theology is God's sovereignty.<sup>685</sup> Barth emphasized that God is the sovereign Lord. He insisted on the sovereignty of God through his discussion on Wholly Other (section 2.2.3). Humans are in a helpless and sinful state in which they cannot know God by themselves. However, God breaks the silence and calls humans by God's decision (section 2.4.2). According to the doctrine of election, God sovereignly elects Jesus Christ, as the representation of humans, so that humans become God's covenant partner. In short, the divine calling is the product of God's sovereignty through and through. There is no other starting place of divine calling except God's sovereignty.

---

<sup>685</sup> CD I/1, 348.



God starts divine call from God's sovereignty, and God calls according to God's wisdom. Whitehead proposed that God calls by sharing God's wisdom.<sup>686</sup> In Whitehead's view, God's primordial nature represents God's wisdom (section 3.3.2). God is infinitely wise and has the grand primordial vision for creations. God's primordial vision is the foundation of the world's order and beauty. In order to actualize God's grand vision in the world, God calls according to God's wisest vision.

God initiates the divine call from sovereignty. God calls the world according to God's wisdom. God actualizes the divine call by bestowing grace. For Eckhart, grace is the extension of Godself.<sup>687</sup> It also is God's self-communication, through which God's nature is shared to creation. Eckhart understood that God could not bless creations except through sharing God's nature (section 4.2.3) because God's nature stores all the blessing and richness. I have argued that the effect of grace to Eckhart is equivalent to divine calling to us; both achieve the same goal to draw humans relate to God (section 4.3.2). In other words, we can understand that God actualizes divine call in humans through God's grace. Humans can do nothing but wait upon God to obtain grace. God's gracious nature assures God bestows God's nature to us to activate divine calling.

## **5.6.2 The Interiority of Divine Calling**

While the divine calling starts from God, it works in human subjectivity. The three thinkers with whom I am in conversation elaborate on three aspects of the subjective experience. Their views can be complementary to each other.

Whitehead, as a metaphysician, explicates the mechanism of divine call through initial aim. God guides and lures creation towards God's vision through the initial aim (section 3.3.3). Humans do not receive the divine calling through external means. Instead, the initial aim is embedded in

---

<sup>686</sup> PR 345.

<sup>687</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 151.

the ontological structure of creation. As the initial aim is the crucial element that constitutes subjectivity,<sup>688</sup> I argue that it is the core of human essence. Whitehead's theory of initial aim shows that even though the divine call is from God, it arises from within humans. The initial aim conveys God's vision, yet it entirely incorporates inside the human structure.

Barth, as a theologian, expounds on the divine call corresponding to the triune God. Barth pointed out in his doctrine of revelation that the Holy Spirit is the revealedness of revelation (section 2.4.1). The Holy Spirit creates the subjective experience in response to the revelation on the human side.<sup>689</sup> Barth explained it as the pneumatological principle of mediation (section 2.3.2). Figurative speaking, the divine call is not an external voice speaking to humans; on the contrary, it is a small voice from the Holy Spirit inside humans.

Eckhart, as an experienced spiritual counselor, taught that one should heed the divine calling from within instead of from outside. Eckhart directed his followers to practice self-denial and contemplation to retreat to interiority (section 4.3.1).<sup>690</sup> Eckhart understood that external simulations are distractions that deter a person from heeding to the divine calling (4.2.2). The only way to heed the divine calling is to turn inward. When a person denies the self and detaches herself from earthly stimulations, she returns to her interiority, the sacred place to meet God.<sup>691</sup> According to Eckhart's insight, the inner experience of divine call materializes through the event of the birth of the Son and breakthrough. Both events occur in the 'intellect,' which is the deep of the soul (section 4.3.3 and 4.3.4). In short, when God and humans unite in the deep of the soul, the divine call completes.

---

<sup>688</sup> Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance*, 167.

<sup>689</sup> CD I/2, 203-204.

<sup>690</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 278.

<sup>691</sup> Schurmann, *Wandering Joy*, 177.

In conclusion, all three thinkers agree that the divine call is conveyed to the deep of human subjectivity. Whitehead, as a metaphysician, explicates the mechanism of interior call. Barth, as a theologian, expounds on the divine reality to become human subjectivity corresponding to the work of the Holy Spirit. Eckhart, as an experienced spiritual counselor, offers practical instructions to deny the self and the phenomenal world. His instructions are for preparing the reception of grace in the deep of the soul. Coincidentally, the work of the Holy Spirit according to Barth is similar to Whitehead's concept of initial aim. Both the initial aim and Holy Spirit establish the channel of divine communication inside humans. Moreover, both play an essential role in the formation of subjective experience. For Whitehead, the initial aim is the source of subjectivity (section 3.3.3). For Barth, the Holy Spirit creates the subjective experience of divine reality (section 2.3.2).

### **5.6.3 God Incorporates Human Responses of Divine Call into Godself**

I propose that the event of divine call is a cycle of divine movement. God initiates the divine call; then God effectuates the divine call inside humans; finally, God incorporates human responses into God's self. The event of divine call starts from God, and also completes when it returns to God. God is "in becoming" through the cycle. Whitehead and Barth devised different theories to describe how God embraces human responses into God's self.

Barth took the high-level conceptual approach to account for the overall human-divine interaction. Barth formulated the doctrine of election to define Jesus Christ as the interface of all God and human interaction.<sup>692</sup> The humanity of God explains how God embraces humans into God's self. To Barth, the Son after incarnation becomes the God-man forever. Thus, the second person of Trinity is the alias of all humans. Humanity is permanently incorporated into the divine life of Trinity. In the discussion of election, Barth further elaborated on how the life history of

---

<sup>692</sup> CD II/2, 104-5, 145.

Jesus Christ recaptures all human responses (section 2.4.2). In response to the divine calling, there are two kinds of responses, and both are represented in life of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, Jesus Christ is the embodiment of all positive human responses. He is the obedient Son who stands before God. Thus, all the positive responses are accepted in the beloved Son.<sup>693</sup> On the other hand, Jesus also embraced all the negative responses. He bore the punishment from God as a sinner.<sup>694</sup> Hence, human responses are represented in Jesus Christ and are fully embraced in the life of God.<sup>695</sup>

Whitehead, as a metaphysician, elaborated the mechanism of how God incorporates the actual feedbacks from the world processes. According to Whitehead, every concreting process goes through the collection, decision, and satisfaction phases. After the final satisfaction phases, the process settles into 'fact.'<sup>696</sup> Then, the consequent nature of God receives all the world 'facts' and embraces them to become part of God (section 3.3.4). Transposing these to divine calling, God starts to bestow God's calling through the initial aim. Then creations made their decisions by either following the initial aim or refusing. Eventually, God receives all the world's responses and incorporates them into God's consequent nature.

Although Whitehead and Barth seem to offer totally different accounts of how God embraces the human responses into God's self, in my opinion, they are not contradicted. Barth took the high-level conceptual approach to account for the overall human-divine interaction. Barth aimed to show God's commitment to the world; therefore, God cares and bears the consequences of the world in the second person of Trinity. Thus, God incorporates all consequences of humans, either obedience or disobedience, into the salvation history of Jesus Christ. On the other hand,

---

<sup>693</sup> CD IV/1, 283.

<sup>694</sup> CD IV/1, 211.

<sup>695</sup> CD III/2, 114-115.

<sup>696</sup> PR 35.

Whitehead took the programmatic approach to outline the mechanism of the process. He described the actual occurrence in the concurring process to show how God actually changes by incorporating the worldly processes into God's self.

## **5.7 The Transfiguration of Identity**

I have elucidated the divine calling on God's side: the cycle starting from God and returning to God, whereby humans are brought to God to have a relationship with God in the cycle. I propose that, on the human side, the effect of divine calls invokes personal transformation.

I understand that personal transformation includes turning away from the old self and embracing the new self that emerges from the relationship with God. Some theologians call person transformation conversion.<sup>697</sup> Scholars point out that the experience of conversion is closely related to one's perception of self-identity.<sup>698</sup> Scot McKnight even defines conversion as "the formation of self-identity in accordance with the central features of a faith."<sup>699</sup> I agree that self-identity is the key to understanding transformation. I now expound on the experience of divine calling in the light of self-identity.

### **5.7.1 Barth: True Identity is in Christ**

The divine calling, according to Barth, is configured thoroughly Christocentric. Barth's theology sets the premise of divine calling in Jesus Christ. According to the trinitarian pattern of divine calling, the Son is the content of divine call (section 2.3.1). We are called to be like the Son.<sup>700</sup> Further, in Barth's exposition of the divine image, Barth asserts that Jesus is the true humanity

---

<sup>697</sup> Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), 7; Scot Mcknight, *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

<sup>698</sup> See Beverly Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*, Overtures to Biblical Theology 20 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Richard Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>699</sup> McKnight, *Turning to Jesus*, 1.

<sup>700</sup> CD II/1, 148.

(section 2.5.1). Humans are called to identify with Christ so that they also inherit a new identity in Christ.

I found that Barth's Christocentric understanding of identity is essential to understanding transformative experience, which also aligns with Paul's teaching in the New Testament. Paul said in "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." (Gal. 2:20 NRSV) He also wrote, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor. 5:17 NRSV). In light of Barth's Christocentric formulation of Christian identity, I maintain that a called person is no longer the same because she is a new creation in Christ. Whoever follows the call of Jesus Christ puts on with the new self of Christ (cf. Eph 4:20-24). With the new identity of Christ, Christians live for Christ. They fulfill their calling by living out Christ's example to love God and neighbors. In conclusion, Christians are called to live out the new identity in Christ.

### **5.7.2 Whitehead: Identity is Contingence upon Divine Calling**

While Barth's theology defines that the new identity is in Christ, Whitehead's metaphysics shows us the mechanism of identity formation. Whitehead's metaphysics explains that identity is not an isolated fixed entity; instead, it is the cumulation of the perpetual process of receiving, integrating, and finalizing.<sup>701</sup> In other words, identity comes after the experience. It is the product derived from all previous experiences (section 3.4.1). In light of Whitehead's insight, identity does not precede the divine calling. Instead, the identity of a person arises after the person responds to the divine call. The initial aim, as the divine call, conveys God's vision for creations. Then creations decide whether to follow or reject the divine vision by their own choice. The corresponding identity, therefore, arises as to the result of the response. In other words, a person becomes what she acts.

---

<sup>701</sup> PR 41-42.

Moreover, identity continuously evolves. When a person changes her course of actions, her identity will be changed. Conversely, a person also can confirm her identity when she iterates the same act. Whitehead's insight reminds us that our identity with God is confirmed by continuously following God's calling. Divine calling is not a one-off event; it lasts over time. From a practical perspective, I maintain that religious identity formation is developed by habit. When Christians cultivate the discernment of divine calling through the habit of spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, contemplation, meditation, etc., then they develop their identity in relation to God.

### **5.7.3 Eckhart: Identity is Non-Difference**

Eckhart depicted that humans unite with God's self in the ground. In transposing Eckhart's concept to the divine call, I stipulate that when a person responds to God's call, she returns to the life source and unites with God. When she unites with God, she is one with God. Thus, the boundary between God and her disappears. She is also a god so to speak (section 4.3.5).

I interpret that the concept of oneself becoming a 'god,' according to Eckhart, is similar to an experience of non-different identity, which is introduced by mystics.<sup>702</sup> Mystics introduce non-difference as the third category beyond the category of identical and difference. For mystics, language is inadequate in expressing the experience of feeling both identical and difference at the same time when they are in union with God. Non-difference is a category transcended beyond human logic. It not only asserts identical but also transcends the category of identical to maintain individuality. One may argue that the category of non-difference is a tautology. It combines logical contradictions but adds no new content to it. Nonetheless, one should see the parallel between the idea of non-difference and the oriental/mystic concept of nothingness. Both try to invent language

---

<sup>702</sup> See Louis Roy, O.P., *Mystical Consciousness: Western Perspectives and Dialogue with Japanese Thinkers* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2003); Joan Stambaugh, *The Formless Self* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999).

to describe the inexpressible transcendence of categories where no form or content is adequate in expression.<sup>703</sup>

In my interpretation, in the experience of union with God, a person sees the world as God sees the world in the non-different identity (section 4.3.6). As God permeates the world and the world is also in God, God and the world are non-different. In addition, she also feels non-difference with the world. Her self becomes no boundary to the world; thus, she can identify with anything and everything with the world. Because of her new non-difference identity, she deeply sympathizes with the world. She also heeds nothing because she contains everything. She can just live and love without reason (section 4.4.1).<sup>704</sup>

I formulate that the experience of divine calling is conversion, which is realized through the transfiguration of identity. The three thinkers depict three aspects of identity which are complementary with each other. Barth's Christocentric theology establishes identity in Christ. His theology defines that the content of identity is bound by Christ and Christ alone. We can only fulfill our calling by living out the life of Christ, that is to love God and neighbors. Whitehead's metaphysics stipulates the mechanism of identity formation. Personal identity can change over time. The continuous obedience to divine call confirms personal identity before God. Eckhart's non-difference identity extends relationships to the world. It demonstrates that personal identity is open to others. When a person experience breakthrough, in Eckhart's term, she sympathizes with the world beyond her ego-centric reference. She becomes genuinely compassionate to all creations. In the non-different self, one equally loves the self and the others. She loves everything equally because everything is part of her new self in God.

---

<sup>703</sup> Joan Stambaugh, *The Formless Self* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999).

<sup>704</sup> Eckhart's idea of non-different self is similar to the Shunyata Self in Zen Buddhism. In the state of Shunyata Self, the boundary between self and the world dissolves, the identity is empty. The person experiences herself as a member of the world. Cf. Stambaugh, *The Formless Self*, 50.



## **5.8 Applications**

As an experienced spiritual counselor, Eckhart knew that spiritual exercise and discipline are necessary for uniting with the ‘ground.’ Likewise, just understanding the concept of divine calling is not enough. One has to experience it. I now point out two applications relating to the theology of divine calling.

### **5.8.1 Teaching divine calling as an aspect of life**

Since Reformation, people have commonly related the divine calling to a temporal profession or religious office. This dissertation has been a study in demonstrating how the divine calling is essential to the core of Christian faith. I have explained that divine calling is an intricate divine-human interaction. It is an essential and perpetual aspect of Christian living. Hence, heeding divine call is more than seeking guidance for the profession. It needs to relate to every aspect of life. The teaching on divine calling in the way I have illumined could awaken Christians to heed the interaction with God in every moment. Christians need to cultivate an attentive attitude to relate to God in every moment. When Christians realize they are called to stand before God, they are motivated to live for God. They judge the world according to God’s values too. They also pursue to attend to God’s will in every moment of their decisions.

### **5.8.2 Divine calling and identity formation**

Paul wrote, “the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.” (Romans 1:16 NRSV) The gospel promises transformation. The crucial question in ministry is, how can people experience transformation? I have expounded that the experience of divine calling is personal transformation in terms of the transfiguration of identity. Researches also have shown

that identity formation is a crucial part of personal transformation.<sup>705</sup> A person has to form a new identity in Christ in order to commit to the cause of God's kingdom.<sup>706</sup> From my personal experience as a pastor, I see that when a person is assured of her calling, she will have a secure identity in God. Such identity can shape her worldview and define her life purpose.

Furthermore, the identity in Christ resulting from the divine calling is an appreciated insight in challenging times. Bonhoeffer reflected on his identity when he was in prison. In his poem *Who am I?*, he arrived at a consolidating conclusion that he was God's servant.<sup>707</sup> The relationship with God is his ultimate comfort. The calling of God gave him hope and certainty of self to endure the challenging time.

Likewise, the teaching of the divine call is valuable in the current time. When identity politics dominates the political arena and media discussions, special interest groups appeal to identity to get people's affiliation. While groups are competing, different segments of identities also compete with each other. The issue of identity is more confusing than ever. When Christians know that God calls them and their identity is in Christ, they are assured that they are sons and daughters of God transcending any category. The identity in Christ could become an anchor to prevent Christians from losing sight of their true selves.

## **5.9 Further Investigations**

The application of identity could go in many directions. Owing to the limitation of space, I cannot elaborate more here. I now point out the possible areas for future exploration. As the theory of divine calling indicates that the divine-human interaction is the core of being humans,

---

<sup>705</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 2002), 28-30.

<sup>706</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 28.

<sup>707</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Eberhard Bethge trans. (New York: SCM Press, Ltd., 1997), 347.

anthropology can be seen in a new light. This dissertation has explored some elements of theological anthropology, such as Barth's exposition of *Imago Dei*, Whitehead's model of personhood, and Eckhart's understanding of humans and the ground. However, there are still many worthy investigating areas, such as the metaphysics or nature of the soul, cultural influence on calling, etc. I would like to see this dissertation generating more research interests related to the divine calling in the future.

## Bibliography

### Karl Barth

#### Original Text:

- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. Edit. by T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-75.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. Trans. Douglas Horton. New York: Harper, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Humanity of God*. Trans. J.N. Thomas and T. Wieser. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. Trans. Grover Foley. New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dogmatics in Outline* (1947 lectures). New York: Harper Perennial, 1959,
- \_\_\_\_\_. "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth*. Trans. Peter Fraenkel. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946.

#### Secondary Text:

- Bromiley, Geoffrey William. *An introduction to the theology of Karl Barth*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : William B. Eerdmans, 1979.
- Busch, Eberhard. *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Text*. Trans. John Bowden. London: SCM Press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. Darrel L. Guder and Judith J. Guder. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Dalferth, Ingolf U. "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism" in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, Ed. S. W. Sykes. London: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Dorrien, Gary. *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- Gibson, David "The day of God's mercy: Romans 9-11 in Barth's doctrine of election," in *Engaging with Barth*, Ed. David Gibson and Daniel Stringe. New York: T. & T. Clark, 2008.
- Gordon, Clark. *Karl Barth's Theological Method*. Trinity Foundation, 2nd ed., 1997.
- Gorringe, Timothy. *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Hunsinger, George. *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Johnson, William Stacy. *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology*. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Mangina, Joseph L. *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.
- Jüngel, Eberhard. *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Trans. John Webster. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- McCormack, Bruce. *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936*. London: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Oakes, Kenneth. *Karl Barth on Theology and Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reading Karl Barth: A Companion to Karl Barth's Epistle to the Romans*. Eugene: Cascade, 2011.
- Price, Daniel J. *Karl Barth's anthropology in light of modern thought*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Rosato, Philip J. *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth*. Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1981
- Webster, John. *Barth*. 2nd ed., London: Continuum, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

## **Alfred North Whitehead**

### **Original text:**

- Whitehead, Alfred North and Russell, Bertrand. *Principia Mathematica*, 3 volumes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910-1913.
- Whitehead, Alfred North . *An Introduction to Mathematics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Concept of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Science and the Modern World* (Lowell Institute Lectures 1925). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprinted New York: The Free Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Religion in the Making* (Lowell Institute Lectures 1926). New York: The Macmillan Company. Reprinted New York: Fordham University Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Process and Reality* (Gifford Lectures 1927–28). New York: Macmillan. Corrected edition, David Ray Griffin & Donald W. Sherburne (eds.), New York: The Free Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Adventures of Ideas*. New York: Macmillan Company. Reprinted New York: The Free Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Modes of Thought*. New York: Macmillan Company. Reprinted New York: The Free Press, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Essays in Science and Philosophy*. New York: Philosophical Library. Reprinted Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1968.

### **Secondary text:**

- Abe, Masao. "Mahyana Buddhism and Whitehead." In *Zen and Western Thought*, ed. W. R. La Fleur, 152-70. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985.
- Bracken, Joseph, and Marjorie Suchocki, eds. *Trinity in Process: A Relational Theology of God*. New York: Continuum, 1997.
- Browning, Douglas, ed. *Philosophers of Process*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1965.
- Cobb, John B. *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*, second edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Whitehead Word Book: A Glossary with Alphabetic Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality*. Anoka, MN: Process Century Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. and David Ray Griffin. *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 1976.
- Code, Murray. *Order & Organicism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985.
- Collingwood, Robin George. *The Idea of Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945.
- Ford, Lewis. *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics: 1925–1929*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Transforming Process Theism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000.
- Gaskill, Nicholas & A.J. Nocek (eds.) *The Lure of Whitehead*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- Griffin, David Ray (ed.). *Deep Religious Pluralism*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Faber, Roland. *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies*. Trans. Douglas W. Scott. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "De-Ontologizing God: Levinas, Deleuze, and Whitehead." In *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernism*, ed. Catherine Keller and Anne Daniel, 209-34. Albany: SUNY, 2002.
- Hartshorne, Charles. *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays, 1935–1970*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Whitehead in Historical Context," in Charles Hartshorne & W. Creighton Peden, *Whitehead's View of Reality*, UK: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2010, p.7–30.
- Hosinski, Thomas E. *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance: An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1993.
- Johnson, A. H. *Whitehead's Theory of Reality*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1952.
- Jones, Judith. *Intensity: An Essay in Whiteheadian Ontology*, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998.
- Kraus, Elizabeth. *The Metaphysics of Experience: A Companion to Whitehead's Process and Reality*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1998.
- Lango, J. W. *Whitehead's Ontology*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1972.
- Lawrence, N. M. *Whitehead's Philosophical Development*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956.
- Leclerc, Ivor. *Whitehead's Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition*. London: Allen and Unwin; New York: Macmillan, 1958.
- Lowe, Victor. *Understanding Whitehead*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work, Volume I: 1861–1910*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work; Volume II: 1910–1947*, J.B. Schneewind (ed.). Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Mesle, Robert. *Process-Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead*. Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008.
- Palter, R. M. *Whitehead's Philosophy of Science*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.
- Plamondon, Ann L. *Whitehead's Organic Philosophy of Science*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1979.
- Ross, S. D. *Perspective in Whitehead's Metaphysics*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983.
- Sherburne, Donald W. *A Whiteheadian Aesthetics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.

Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt. *God Christ Church: A practical Guide to Process Theology*. New Revised Edition. New York: Crossroad, 1995.

### **Meister Eckhart**

#### **Original text:**

Clark, J. M. and J. V. Skinner, *Treatises and Sermons of Meister Eckhart*. New York: Harper and Row, 1958.

Colledge, E. and Bernard McGinn. *Meister Eckhart: the Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defence*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

Fox, M. *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation*. New York: Image Books, 1980.

McGinn, Bernard with Tobin, F. and Borgstadt, E., *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*. Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.

Walshe, Maurice O'C. *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, the third edit. with a foreward by B. McGinn. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2010.

#### **Secondary text:**

Ashley, Benedict M., O.P. "Three Strands in the Thought of Eckhart, the Scholastic Theologian." *The Thomist* 42 (April, 1978): 226-239.

Barciauskas, jonas. *The Dynamic of Person in Eckhart's Mysticism and its Relation to the Sunyata Doctrine*. Dissertation, Fordham University Department of Theology, 1983.

Caputo, John D. *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, Rev. edit. Ohio: Fordham University Press, 1986.

Clark, James M. *Meister Eckhart: An Introduction to the Study of his Works with an Anthology of his Sermons*. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957.

Colledge, Edmond, O.S.A. "Meister Eckhart: Studies on his Life and Work." *The Thomist* 42 (April, 1978): 240-258.

Davies, Oliver. *Meister Eckhart Mystical Theology*. London: SPCK, 2011.

Flasch, Kurt. *Meister Eckhart Philosopher of Christianity*. Trans. Anne Schindel and Aaron Vanides. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

Forman, Robert K.C. *Meister Eckhart Mystic as Theologian*. Rockport, MA: Element, 1991.

Fox, Matthew, O.P. "Meister Eckhart and Karl Marx: The Mystic as Political Theologian." In *Understanding Mysticism*. Edited by Richard Woods, O.P. Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1980, pp. 541-563.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation*. New York: Image Books, 1980.

Harrington, Joel F. *Dangerous Mystic: Meister Eckhart's Path to the God within*. New York: Penguin Press. 2018.

Kelley, C.F. *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

McGinn, Bernard. *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_. *They Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Meister Eckhart: An Introduction." In *Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe*, edited by Paul Szernach. Binghamton: SUNY Press, 1984. Pp237-258.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart." *Journal of Religion* 61 (1981): 1-19.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Eckhart's Trial Reconsidered." *The Thomist* 44 (1980): 390-414.
- Mechthilde de Magdeburg. *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*. Trans. by Lucy Menzies. London: Longmans and Green, 1953.
- O'Meara, Thomas. "The Presence of Meister Eckhart." *The Thomist* 42 (April, 1978): 171-81.
- Politella, Joseph. "Meister Eckhart and Eastern Wisdom." *Philosophy East and West* 15 (1965): 117-133.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Fundamental Themes in Meister Eckhart's Mysticism." *The Thomist* 42 (April 1978): 197-225.
- Schurmann, Reiner. *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Wandering Joy: Meister Eckhart's Mystical Philosophy*. Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2001.
- Tobin, Frank. "Eckhart's Mystical Use of Language: The Contexts of *eigenschaft*." *Seminar* 8 (1972): 159-68.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Meister Eckhart*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Loss of Origin in Soto Zen and Meister Eckhart." *The Thomist* 42 (April, 1978): 281-312.
- Woods, Richard. *Eckhart's Way*. Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Meister Eckhart: Master of Mystics*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2011.

#### **Other:**

- Augustine, *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, trans. and ed. Baniface Ramsey and Raymond Canning. Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2008.
- Boaheng, Isaac. "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral and Contemporary" *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology*, vol. 2 no. 3, August 2020, pp 87-95.
- Collin, Kenneth J. *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1997.
- Echternach, H. "Work, Vocation, Calling," *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Julius Bodensieck 3 vols. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology, Third ed.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Franke, John R. *Manifold Witness: The Plurality of Truth*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009.
- Frei, Hans. *Types of Christian Theology*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. trans. George Eliot. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957.
- Gaventa, Beverly. *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*, Overtures to Biblical Theology 20. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999.
- Grenz, Stanley. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Helmer, Christine. *Theology and the End of Doctrine*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014
- Hoglund, Jonathan. *Called by Triune Grace: Divine Rhetoric and the Effectual Call*. Downers Grove, Illinois, IVP Academic, 2016.



- Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Lindbeck, George A. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984.
- Luther, Martin “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” in *Luther’s Works, Vol. 36: Word and Sacrament II*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann and Abdel R. Wentz. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959.
- Mackintosh, Hugh. *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1937.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Sixth Ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2017.
- Mcknight, Scot. *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, Third ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Neafsey, John. *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 2006.
- Pailin, David A. *The Anthropological Character of Theology: Conditioning Theological Understanding*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Peace, Richard. *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Wallis, Jim. *The Call to Conversion: Why Faith is Always Personal but Never Private*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. New York: Blackwell, 1953.
- Yong, Amos. *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014.

## Appendix

### Alberto Giacometti's Sketching Style and Phenomenological Method

The method of this dissertation is inspired by the sketching method of swiss artist Alberto Giacometti (c. 1922-1966) and the related phenomenological theory behind it. Giacometti attempted to create artworks as he saw them and the way he thought they ought to be seen. His sketch works were characterized by overlapping raw sketch lines. Giacometti drew the sketch lines to represent the subject that appeared to him. However, the subject was dynamic instead of 'dead.' After the first layer of sketch lines was drawn, he noticed differences while continuing to 'look' at the subject. Thus, he added another layer of sketch lines on top of the previous layer. The process repeated until his final sketch was done. The final sketch is not the 'total' representation of the subject, because the subject was living, which the sketch could not fully capture. However, the overlapping of sketch lines clearly brought out the shapes and features of the subject. The viewers can perceive the subject through the sketch.

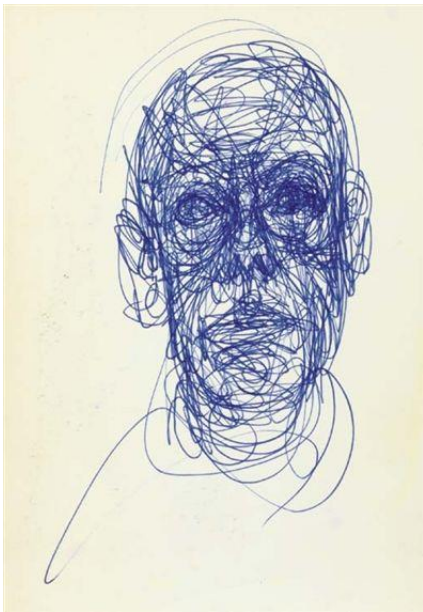


Figure 1 copyright from *Adieu la passerose* the (1962) By Giacometti Alberto

I believe that the reality of divine calling is a 'living' reality that cannot be fully captured in one system or perspective. However, each theological form, embedded with its concerns and historical conditions, captures one specific perspective of the subject matter. Like Giacometti sketching layers of lines to draw the same subject, I consecutively depict the reality of divine calling using Karl Barth's, A. N. Whitehead's, and Meister Eckhart's theological forms. Giacometti overlapped different layers of sketch lines to bring out the features of the subject. Likewise, I overlap the insights from the three perspectives to bring out the features of divine calling. Furthermore, Giacometti did not smooth out or 'harmonize' the sketch lines of different layers. The final sketch is "messy," so to speak, because it attempts to capture the living subject with a two-dimensional image. Nonetheless, it still can appeal to the viewers about the subject. I also do not harmonize the insights of the three figures. I believe that presenting their insights as they are can let them directly speak to us about the reality of divine calling.