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Images of God – found in Pastoral Care and Psychotherapy

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When we humans speak of God, we are necessarily bound with the structure of our own human mind. We cannot step outside it and approach God directly, ignoring the mental material furnished by our psyche. My experience as a practising psycho-analyst has suggested me that the same psychic forces that shape for example our experiences of our fellow-men also shape the ways we experience God. The human mind does not contain a separate spiritual sphere that would be uncontaminated by other areas of our psyche.

So, in this presentation I am not speaking about God. Instead, I try to analyse the unconscious mental material that lies behind our religious language and our religious experiences. In other words, I try to describe some archetypal images of the relationship between God and man inherent in the Christian tradition.

The tool that I am using for this analysis is based on the psycho-analytic object relations theory. Melanie Klein, the grand old lady of this theory, suggested that the unconscious part of our mind is made up of phantasies that involve two parties bound to each other by strong mutual emotions. Klein called these parties the ego and the object, I and thou. These both parties are basically derivatives of the drives, the great motivational forces of the mind, but in their details the ego and its object are greatly shaped by the infant's emotional experiences with his parents. In a somewhat simplistic fashion, one could call the Kleinian ego *the inner child* and the Kleinian object *the inner parent*. In this presentation I have chosen to use these more experience-near, but less scientific terms.

In the inner world, there is not just one ego or one child and not just one object or parent. Experiences in the analyst's consulting room suggest that there are different kinds of both children and parents. So far I have differentiated two types of children and five types of parents. These inner agents communicate unconsciously with each other within our heads all the time, and the communication grows particularly intense when we meet an emotionally important person, whether he be important in good or bad. The inner children and parents could be seen as different sets of emotional eye-glasses through which we view the world. The psycho-analytic relationship offers a unique opportunity for their profound analysis, but their influence can be traced in many other human fields as well, from sexuality to politics and from art to religion. Within religion, the role of an inner parent is typically attributed to God while man usually assumes the role of an inner child.

It seems that the inner children and parents are born in a certain chronological order within the mind of the individual as well as within the collective consciousness of mankind. I will use the rest of this presentation in order to give some glimpses of their manifestations in various fields of human life, particularly in religion.

The Exciting Parent

In the 1970's, the archaeologist Marija Gimbutas presented her thesis about the social and religious order in the so called Neolithic Old Europe, which means the present Balkan and Near East area. Gimbutas claimed that the culture of that prehistoric Old Europe was structured

around the worship of the Great Mother Goddess. Gimbutas also supposed that the societies of that time were mostly headed by women.

Gimbutas' studies aroused great enthusiasm in certain feministic circles and led to what was later, in some academic circles, called *the Goddess Movement*. The supposed prehistoric time of the Goddess was idealised by many feministically oriented scholars, including Riane Eisler, who in her study *The Chalice and the Blade* argued that the era of the Goddess was a harmonious time of peace and prosperity. According to Eisler, that era was brought to an end, and the flourishing Goddess cultures were destroyed around 3500 B.C. by militant Indo-European peoples who worshipped male patriarchal gods. And, the supporters of the Goddess Movement complain, the power of the patriarchal Heavenly Father has continued ever since.

Well, it can't be denied that, in the life cycle of any human individual, the mother is the first one. She is normally the person who gives the baby his first impressions of another human being. Those early impressions are, however, of a very peculiar kind. In the moment of sensory satisfaction, when the baby sucks his mother's breast, he experiences her like an omnipotent source of boundless happiness and joy. Since the mouth is the infant's chief source of satisfaction, he experiences the satisfying milk as oral nectar, a wondrous flow of divine beverage. Using all the power of his burning primitive passion he sucks himself into the mother - or, one could also say: he eats her up. His aim is to attain a complete bodily and mental union with her.

Experiences like this have very specific consequences in the inner world of the infant. They lead to the formation of *the Exciting Parent*. And in his passionate strive for union with this inner parent, the infant assumes the inner role of *the Dependent Child*. When the infant grows up, both of these very early inner agents will be pushed into the unconscious. But there they exert their influence and are being reactivated throughout life in moments of intimate emotional closeness.

A typical example of this reactivation occurs when a person falls in love. The passionate strive for union, common to lovers, is common also to the inner relationship between the Exciting Parent and the Dependent Child. Between lovers, this inner relationship finds its ultimate satisfaction in sexual intercourse and in orgasm.

There are other examples, too. Certain group experiences may give the participants an oceanic feeling of ultimate oneness and unity. This feeling has its blissful as well as its frightening aspects. Some people use drugs in order to achieve a somewhat parallel experience of perfect sensual satisfaction. Within business organizations, the reactivation of the inner relationship between the Exciting Parent and the Dependent Child typically creates a culture of dependency. The boss is then expected to fulfil all the needs of the employees. They just sit with their mouths wide open and wait for the boss to feed them.

Even God can be experienced through the image of the Exciting Parent. He is then like the sun giving life to all living and making all things exist. Or he may be experienced in somewhat pantheistic fashion as Nature giving her gifts to man.

But in the role of the Exciting Parent, God can produce even much more intense feelings. We do not know the details of the religious rites of the prehistoric worshippers of the Great Mother Goddess - if she ever existed. However, the passionate desire for sensual satisfaction, aroused by the Exciting Parent, would suggest that the religion of the Great Mother could very well have been dominated by strivings for intense feelings or for exceptional states of consciousness. Even drugs may have been utilized. An ancient female figurine found in Crete wears a crown decorated with puppies, which, as you know, is the source of opium. Some old Indian religious rites suggest that sexuality might have had a much more prominent role in religion in prehistoric times than we can imagine today.

The Exciting Parent invites the inner child to unite with it in an ecstasy of fusion. Sexual intercourse is one of the most powerful human means for experiencing this ecstasy. It is not difficult to see that sexuality offers a very relevant channel in the desire to unite with God, who reveals himself - or herself! - in the role of the Exciting Parent. Possibly the temple prostitution, known to us from the classical antiquity, has aimed at the same goal. The worshipper of the Great Goddess reached union with his Mistress uniting sexually with her servant.

In our present-day culture, sex and religion have quite often been regarded as nearby opposites. However, this has not always been the case. For example, in Finland we have a revival movement in the north, that originates from the 19th century, founded by Lars Levi Laestadius. Particularly in its beginning that movement offered the converts ecstatic experiences of intimate closeness. The believers experienced themselves as the intimate members of the tiny flock of the saved ones. And there are records telling that sometimes this ecstatic mutual union expressed itself even in sexual forms. An example of the language used by a lay preacher of this movement: "The Great Shepherd lets his trembling lambs suck his breasts flooding of the milk of mercy, and so refreshed, they start running around on the Mount Zion like elks and rejoice at the wedding banquet of the Lamb."

The traditional Christian doctrine teaches us that in the beginning the world there was a paradise, a state without any need or any evil. A similar state will be regained after the end of history, in heaven. There the saved ones will partake in the wedding banquet of the Lamb. In New Jerusalem there shall be no more death or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. There God himself will satisfy all the needs of his faithful, and the saved ones enjoy the indescribable bliss of seeing God from face to face. This state of bliss bears close resemblance to the satisfying relationship between the mother and the baby, in other words, the relationship between the Exciting Parent and the Dependent Child. Even in the present aeon man can get a foretaste of the same heavenly bliss in the Holy Communion, where he eats the body of the incarnate God and drinks his holy blood.

Ecstatic forms of religion in all times have used images resembling the relationship between the Exciting Parent and the Dependent Child. The most important aim of man in this form of religion is to seek powerful emotional experiences and try to attain an intimate communion with God, as well as with fellow believers. Visions, revelations and prophecies create an atmosphere of intimacy as they fade out the boundary between this world and the world to come - and also the boundaries between the individual believers. A prophesying person takes himself the right to enter deeply into his neighbour's mind.

Well, why isn't all religion even today organized around the inner relationship between the Exciting Parent and the Dependent Child? The answer lies in the utterly contradictory and ambivalent nature of the Exciting Parent. This inner parent has the power to arouse extremely good as well as equally extremely bad feelings in the inner child. Riane Eisler with her feminist supporters has completely neglected this fact. The bad Exciting Parent can arouse two different kinds of bad feelings depending on which inner child it is communicating with, the Dependent or the other one, the *Self-sufficient Child*.

An infant needs his mother in a very comprehensive way. And if the mother for some reason, for example because of her depression, stays emotionally distant from her baby, the infant is liable to interpret the mother's distance as being a result of his greedy needs for intimacy and nutrition. He might conclude that he is hurting his mother by needing her too much. He might fantasize that the mother must protect herself against his needs, and for that reason she remains emotionally distant. And if the mother at this moment is even physically absent, the infant might develop the unconscious idea that the mother has died because of his excessive destructive neediness.

The inner world of the infant is then struck by a catastrophe: he feels that his inner Exciting Parent has been destroyed. As a result, the Dependent Child of the infant falls into a state of unbearable cosmic emptiness. It feels like having lost all of its contacts to anything or to anybody. This very painful emotional state has the quality of absolute inner solitude, something like the ice-cold endless emptiness of the infinite space. Many deeply depressed people are troubled by this phantasy. It is often accompanied by a feeling of utter worthlessness.

Within religion, this experience of ultimate solitude finds its most common expression in the image of God turning his back to man and forsaking him. This is one of the ways the Apocalypse of John defines hell: it is the second death, man's eternal separation from God, from the source of life. It also means man's final destruction, because without contact with God he is doomed to vanish into nothingness.

The Exciting Parent can cause pain to the Self-Sufficient Child, too. This inner child is the personification of man's need for individuation and freedom. On one hand, it appreciates the Exciting Parent for its seductive sensual oral treasures, its ability to give oral satisfaction. But on the other hand, the Self-Sufficient Child is tremendously afraid of the presence of the Exciting Parent because of the chaotic feelings of fusion aroused by this very satisfaction. The Exciting Parent is selfish in its own desire for closeness, and it expects the inner child to satisfy this need. It won't let the child be free and go its own way. Therefore, the Self-Sufficient Child experiences the Exciting Parent as a binding, intruding and suffocating figure, something like a spider or a snake or a cannibalistic monster. The threat of the loss of its individual identity arouses annihilation anxiety in the Self-Sufficient Child and makes it feel like going mad or disintegrating or dying in the huge belly of the greedy inner parent.

The phantasy of a devouring Exciting Parent can be detected in many fairy tales. It is a product of the oral drive. So she is the witch that first roasts children in fire and then eats them up. She can also be a bloodthirsty vampire or a werewolf or a dragon. In the form of a whale she

swallowed Jonah in biblical times and Pinocchio in our days. Ulysses faced her irresistible attraction in the songs of the Sirens. As you remember, this song was extremely beautiful, but it bound its listeners to eternal slavery.

At its worst, the Exciting Parent is an unpredictable and capricious being, driven by selfish impulses. The various love affairs and revenge operations of the gods of the Olympian Pantheon give good examples of its untrustworthiness. However, the unpredictability of such gods can sometimes be controlled by offerings, because they are usually very fond of them. The priests of the goddess Cybele in Asia Minor castrated themselves and sacrificed their penises to this Great Mother of theirs. The semitic god Moloch needed human children for nourishment.

The image of a devouring or a possessing God is not very common within the Christian tradition although a revivalist preacher's call to submit one's life to God or to Jesus might arouse such associations. A more concrete call of this God can be heard in the religiously motivated mass suicides committed by some extremist movements. This is, in fact, what the martyrs do, too, when they give their humble lives to God or, in a more secularised form, to their native country. In the Irani-Iraqi war of the 1980's, small boys were sent to the mine fields with the keys to paradise hanging around their necks. Maybe Allah was glad to receive them in his arms. Similar images might have glittered in the eyes of the 9/11 terrorists when the hijacked aeroplane hit the skyscraper.

Within the Christian tradition, it is more frequent, however, that, instead of God, the devouring Exciting Parent assumes the role of Satan. He is the roaring lion, described by St. Peter in his epistle, looking for someone to devour. In his Revelation, St. John sees Satan as a great whore or a beast. In the role of the Exciting Parent, Satan seduces man by offering him the sweet but so vicious sensual pleasures of this world. But the price man has to pay for these pleasures is the loss of his freedom. He falls under the slavery of sin. And the wage of sin is death, as St. Paul says. In this context, death does not so much mean abandonment, but rather being devoured by the demonic Exciting Parent. At the end, man will be buried in the bosom of the Mother Earth, for example in a sarcophagus, which is Greek and means the devourer of flesh. Death is the final end of man's individual existence.

There are some pieces of Christian art describing the oral nature of Satan. Dante, for example in his *Divina commedia*, describes Satan as incessantly chewing the great traitors of history. I can here show even one Finnish example, from the church of Rymättylä, near Turku.

The Imperial Parent

It might well be that the arbitrary and chaotic nature of the Exciting Parent was one of the collective unconscious factors in the cultural mutation that possibly began to take place some 2000-3000 years B.C., as suggested by Gimbutas and Eisler. At that time, both the image of God and possibly also the political power assumed more and more masculine and patriarchal traits. Many great legislators came up at that time in history, men like Hammurabi, Moses, later also Solon and Lykurgos in Greece. The chaos, characteristic of the Exciting Parent, was in the need of law and order.

The same phenomenon can be seen in our days for example in the treatment programs of some institutions for drug addicts. These institutions have found out that one of the basic prerequisites for successful treatment is a quite stern hierarchical discipline among the patients. This kind of outer discipline is needed in order to structure the chaotic life situation of the drug addicts, whose inner world is greatly dominated by an intense craving for the chaotic sensual satisfaction offered by the Exciting Parent.

The normal development of the infant includes a phase when he wants to gain a greater distance from the mother. And if things go well, there is a time when he finds an emotional contact with a completely new kind of person. This person is the father. And possibly, around the same period, a new inner parent emerges, which I have called *the Imperial Parent*.

Instead of offering chaotic passions, this new inner parent brings both inner children under strict discipline. Its main values are power and glory as well as an absolute control of all sensual passions. It is the absolute opposite of the Exciting Parent. In relation to it, the Depending Child resembles more a small boy adoring his omnipotent father than a baby sucking his mother's breasts. In its good form the Imperial Parent offers the Depending Child the clarity and safety of a powerful authority. The bad Imperial Parent does not suffocate or desert the inner child, as the bad Exciting Parent does, but instead, it humiliates, disgraces or tortures it.

Within human relationships, the Imperial Parent exerts its influence in authoritarian organizations, like for example in military forces. It also functions as the dynamic source of political mythologies supporting strong leadership, like Nazism or Stalinism. In business organizations, the Imperial Parent develops authoritarian, even fascist forms of relating. Power and glory are valued, as well as self-discipline, but weakness and neediness receive general contempt.

The idea of a law enters the inner world along with the Imperial Parent. However, the law of this inner parent is not actually moral. It is not aimed to fulfil any ethical ends. Its sole purpose is to subordinate the inner children under the dominion of the Imperial Parent. The Dependent Child tries to ignore this humiliation and eagerly hurries to fulfil the requirements of the law, as far as it can. However, it is constantly tempted to fall into the sensual and chaotic satisfactions offered by the Exciting Parent. These are absolutely forbidden by the Imperial Parent, who despises and abhors weakness, helplessness and neediness. In human relationships this attitude manifests itself, for example, in the cruel treatment of children and animals. At schools it shows itself in the desire of the bigger and more powerful children to tease and hurt their smaller and weaker companions. Some marriages, too, are built on this kind of emotional communication, which results in mental or physical violence. The spouses are kept together by the same unconscious sadomasochistic inner transaction. The violent partner assumes the role of the Imperial Parent, while the role of the victimized and tortured Dependent Child is given to the weaker spouse.

The antagonism between the Exciting and the Imperial Parent can be seen for example in the religion of the ancient Israel. The Lord God appeared to Moses in Mount Sinai with thunder and lightning and gave his holy law to his chosen people. The law required man to serve the Lord only and to abandon all false idols. These idols were labelled as indecent and lustful,

which is a typical accusation of the Imperial Parent directed at the Exciting Parent.

In the role of the Imperial Parent, God receives the quality of the Lord Sebaoth, the patriarchal God of hosts. He is the militant omnipotent ruler of heaven and earth. He is sitting on his celestial throne in perfect holiness and purity, surrounded by his ineffable glory. This glory is too bright for the eyes of a sinful man. The Lord Sebaoth gives mankind his eternal, holy law. Those obeying that law gain his favor, but woe be to them that break it! They are subjected to his terrible wrath and condemnation, and they are slain by the breath of his mouth.

The Lord Sebaoth is a jealous God. He punishes men for their sins to the third and fourth generation, but he gives his blessing to those that keep his commandments. Obedience is the supreme virtue of his servants, but he also requires that they control their sensual impulses, particularly the sexual ones. The status of sin is assigned to all kinds of oral pleasures, like liquor and tobacco, sometimes even to food. This reflects the relentless attitude of the Imperial Parent towards the Exciting Parent. The idea of sin receives a central position in a religion dominated by the Imperial Parent. The way to heaven is narrow and thorny, but it leads finally to glory, provided that man abolishes all his worldly and carnal lusts. Even in the role of the Imperial Parent God wants to be served by offerings. By giving them, man can show his obedience and placate the Lord's wrath.

The division in two, begun already in the kingdom of the Exciting Parent, is further sharpened under the rule of the Imperial Parent. The good ones are separated from the bad ones, and the bad ones are then destroyed. By choosing one nation to be his own, God simultaneously defined other nations as his enemies. Their destruction was the duty given to Israel. In Deuteronomy God speaks to Israel: "When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are about to enter to occupy it, when he drives out many nations before you, and when the Lord your God delivers them into your power for you to defeat, you must exterminate them. You must not make an alliance with them or spare them." (Deut.7:1-2)

In the role of the Imperial Parent, God reveals his most cruel side in the day of the Last Judgement. That day is *dies irae*, the day of wrath. It means eternal torture for both the lustful and the disobedient sinners. The punishment is executed by fire, which was the most common and most painful means of torture in the ancient times. The wish to make men suffer eternally gives God the appearance of a cosmic sadist.

By subordinating himself under the will of God, man is given freedom from the burden of his personal responsibility. Man also finds a refuge against his frightening and chaotic sensuous impulses. Motives like this lie behind many adolescent conversions and movements like for example True Love Waits. But by subordinating themselves, the faithful ones also take their share of the omnipotent power of the Lord. They become soldiers of the divine army, using the sword of the Lord against the lustful sinners - in an abstract or sometimes even in a concrete way. And so, for example, the crusaders massacred infidels in order to defend the glory of God. Correspondingly, the Muslims have waged holy war for Allah against the Christians. And even in Finland during the Second World War there were some people who regarded it the holy duty given by God to the tiny Finnish nation to fight the godless and atheistic Soviet Union.

In the course of time it may happen that the Self-Sufficient Child begins to feel humiliated in its subordinate position under the dominion of the Imperial Parent. It wants to liberate itself. This wish is absolutely intolerable to the Imperial Parent, which declares this idea as a most formidable high treason against its supreme authority. The Imperial Parent is selfish, too, in the sense that it wants to possess all the power in the inner world. An inner child defying this power will face its ruthless revenge.

In the Christian tradition, this kind of rebellion has commonly been interpreted as human *hubris*, as man's wish to break loose from the patronage of the Heavenly Father. In the beginning, this striving can really be a freedom fight, man's attempt to grow up from a childish relationship with God. Very often, however, this freedom fight seems to turn into a lust for power. A man captured by the *hubris* ascends the throne of God in order to dethrone him and seize God's power to himself. He declares himself to be the sole master of the universe. He denies his dependency on God as well as on nature. This striving for omnipotent power and control has dominated the Western culture ever since the Renaissance.

The Moral Parent

The Imperial Parent, however, is not the only image of God found in the Old Testament. Beginning around 700 B.C., some men stood up in Israel claiming that the traditional sacrificial cult wasn't what God actually expected from his people. Much more important things were justice and righteousness. The prophet Amos declared: "When you bring me your whole-offerings and your grain-offerings I shall not accept them, nor pay heed to your shared-offerings of stall-fed beasts. Spare me the sound of your songs; I shall not listen to the strumming of your lutes. Instead let justice flow on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing torrent." (Amos 5:22-24) And Amos continues: "I shall punish you for all your wrongdoing." (Amos 3:2b)

Amos preaches repentance, trying to stir up guilt in the minds of his listeners because of their wrongdoings. In the mental development of a child, the ability to feel guilt is a remarkable achievement. Guilt wakes him up to personal responsibility. There are even some adults who have not been able to reach this level of development. They either have no conscience at all or their conscience is limited to a very narrow area.

A conscience demanding justice feels like an accusing voice within the mind. I have called that voice *the Moral Parent*. In a somewhat simplified way, it could be defined as a more mature form of the Imperial Parent. The Moral Parent is not as keen on power as the Imperial Parent, but instead it demands justice from the inner children.

In the role of the Moral Parent, God requires ethically faultless conduct from man. Man must fear and love God and serve his neighbor. Subordination is no longer understood as the ultimate will of God. More important things are benevolence, charity and reparation. The Moral Parent creates a new solution to the age-old problem of evil. The more archaic solution of the Imperial Parent is quite straightforward: the bad ones are separated from the good ones and then destroyed. The Moral Parent, instead, punishes the bad ones hoping that punishment would somehow make evil men better or purify them.

This solution of the Moral Parent dwells in the unconscious of us all. Mama loves you if you are a good boy or girl. But if you are naughty, she punishes you or, if you are really bad, she might even abandon you. The New Testament has coded this idea in the classical text by St. Matthew concerning the Last Judgement: in the last day the Son of Man will judge all men by their deeds. Then he condemns to the eternal fire all the wicked and selfish men, those who did not serve their fellow-men. The Roman Catholic Church has, however, developed the idea of the purgatory: having suffered a due time in the flames, the wicked ones are purified and finally let into heaven. This solution, too, reflects the influence of the Moral Parent.

There are even some more merciful images of God acting in the role of the Moral Parent. God can solve the problem of guilt also by forgiving man his sins. But, the Moral Parent demands, after having been forgiven, man must make repentance and give up his old sinful way of life. And, like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, only a terrifying expectation of judgement awaits those that relapse after having received the forgiveness of sins.

The evolving of the Moral Parent means a step towards a more responsible way of life. Man is responsible for his life to God. One of the results is that the Church has sometimes been understood as the conscience of the society. But at least in Finland, this role has more recently been transferred to doctors. Today, death is no longer perceived as the wage of sin like St. Paul said, but rather as the result of one's unhealthy way of life.

A religion dominated by the Moral Parent can easily end up in depression or in moralism. God demands man to give up his own will, because it is irrevocably polluted by the original sin. Therefore, the will of God and the will of man necessarily exclude each other. The will of God is righteous, while the will of man is evil by definition. As a result, it is also difficult for an utterly sinful man really to trust in the grace of God, because God is experienced as so utterly righteous that it is impossible for him to accept anything immoral. God is bound to meet man on a moral and juridical level. Sometimes this results in a double morality, where the forbidden and suppressed wicked and selfish needs of man manifest themselves in hidden and indirect ways.

The Withdrawing Parent

In the Near East, the image of God developed from the Exciting Parent, through the Imperial one, further into the direction of the Moral Parent. In Greece, however, the development took another course. The archaeological findings show us that even there *Gaia*, the Great Mother probably was the first deity. The later Olympian gods did not, however, turn the evolution towards the Imperial or Moral Parent. On the contrary, the passionate feelings and the desire for sensual satisfaction, so characteristic of the Great Mother, still persisted within the Olympian pantheon.

In Greece, a decisive change took place with the development of philosophy. Plato divided the universe in two parts. On one hand there was the material world perceived by the senses, and on the other hand there was the transcendent spiritual world of ideas. Plato did not speak directly of God, but he gave a somewhat resembling role to the Idea of Good. Correspondingly, the

supreme figure in the Aristotelian system was the abstract, remote and impersonal *prima causa*, the Unmoved Mover.

The Greek philosophy has had a tremendous influence upon Christianity as well as on Islam and later Judaism. Plato confirmed the basic antagonism between the material, natural and sensual world of ours and the transcendent, supernatural and spiritual world of God. As a result, God received the characteristics of *aseitas*, which means that he needs nothing from anybody outside himself. God is purely spiritual, changeless, impassible and absolutely perfect.

The image of a distant, transcendent and perfect God reflects the influence of a new inner agent that I have called *the Withdrawing Parent*. It creates an atmosphere of emotional distance between the inner child and the inner parent. This makes the Dependent Child suffer, because it yearns for an intimate closeness with the parent.

Some people organize their love affairs in the spirit of the Withdrawing Parent. The phantasy of the chaotic and dangerous nature of strong passions may result in a situation where intensive feelings of love can be experienced only in externally limited circumstances, for example within a socially forbidden relationship. The loved one is unconsciously chosen beyond oceans or social taboos so that it is possible to meet him or her only in fleeting moments of love that receive the quality of supreme passion. As a result, the relationships of normal life, for example marriage, turn out to be flat and meaningless.

In the role of the Withdrawing Parent, God receives the quality of the Supreme Goodness, *summum bonum*, while man assumes the role of the Dependent Child. God is then experienced as the object of the soul's deepest longings. St. Augustine, who inseparably combined Christianity with Neo-Platonism, insisted that God only is the proper object of man's longing and love, because he is the only object that never perishes. It is a tragic error of man to love anything mundane, because all even good objects of this world inevitably vanish. But there is a divine spark, *scintilla animae*, in the soul of every man, reminding him of his divine origin. So St. Augustine exclaimed: "Restless is our heart until it finds rest in thee, O God."

But a totally different view opens up if man assumes the role of the Self-Sufficient Child, the champion of freedom and individuality. In this role, man experiences emotional closeness as intrusive, overfamiliar and embarrassing. Dependency is considered as a source of shame and disgrace. Privacy, the charm of the bourgeoisie, is greatly appreciated. God's presence is felt as suppressing, because it restricts man's autonomy and self-determination. If God necessarily wants to exist, he had then better stay far away in his heaven and let man mind his own business in this world. The image of God receives deistic features, popular in the Age of Enlightenment. God is experienced as a watchmaker who first winds up the world and then withdraws back to his heaven letting the world go on its own, according to the laws of nature. Voltaire described his relationship to God by uttering: "We greet each other, but otherwise we have no social contact."

After the period of Enlightenment this kind of image of God has increased greatly in popularity. At least in today's Finland, it is probably the most popular one. It has led to secularisation, man's joy and satisfaction for his ability to get along in life without a patronizing God. To great

extent, the belief in God has been substituted by a belief in science. This shift is emotionally motivated by man's urge to break loose from all kinds of dependencies and his desire to gain a complete control of his own life. In the role of the Self-Sufficient Child, he enjoys his own private emotional sphere, disturbed neither by God nor by his fellow-men. The post-modern man avoids all permanent commitments.

It seems, however, that particularly in times of crisis, the Dependent Child makes itself felt even in this post-modern mental universe. In the moment of distress even many a harsh man sends his prayers to God, without necessarily afterwards confessing this kind of weakness even to himself. But this whole idea about prayer being a shameful matter, something in the need of confession, shows how great the power of the Self-Sufficient Child is in certain areas of the Western world, quite especially, I think, in the Nordic countries.

The Healing Parent

The question of evil is an age-old burning problem of mankind. In the inner world, this problem starts with the chaos caused by the arbitrary rule of the Exciting Parent. As a reaction, the Imperial Parent first develops an ability to differentiate between good and evil. It makes a sharp distinction between the goodies and the baddies, and then solves the problem by destroying the baddies. All wars are based on this solution of the problem of evil. After the wicked enemies have been destroyed, only we, the good ones are left.

The solution of the Moral Parent is somewhat more mature: it requires men first to give up their evil deeds, then to repair the consequences of those deeds, and finally to refrain from all evil in the future. The Withdrawing Parent solves the same problem by declaring our material world hopelessly bad. Goodness can be found only somewhere beyond this rotten world of ours, maybe in a spiritual transcendent world. Or perhaps goodness arrives with the UFOs from other planets.

However, there exists one more solution. This solution differs from the other ones already in its starting point: good and evil are not ontologically separated from each other. Wicked men or evil deeds are not considered to originate from some kind of ontological evil will or forces of evil. Evil is neither underestimated by declaring it only as lack of goodness. On the contrary, evil is regarded as a very real human experience, but it is understood as stemming from an unbearable mental or physical pain and suffering. The so called evil is a result of man's attempt to get rid of his pain by discharging it, by making others suffer instead of him.

I think that both psychoanalysis and Christianity have tried to find a solution to the problem of evil in a somewhat similar direction. Both have tried to shift attention from evil men or even evil deeds to the pain and suffering that makes men behave in a destructive way. Both the psychotherapist and the pastoral counsellor try to focus their attention beyond the bad deeds and evil conduct of the patient to the mental contents that make the person feel bad and do evil things. The necessary precondition is a therapeutic relationship, where these unbearable mental contents can be shared and understood. The British psycho-analyst Wilfred Bion called the analyst a container. The analyst is expected to contain his patient's intolerable mental pain by first receiving and processing it within his own mind and then returning it to the patient through

interpretations. As a result of this mutual emotional process, the pain that was initially absolutely intolerable, receives a more bearable quality. By sharing the pain, the therapist assumes the role of the fifth inner parent, *the Healing Parent*.

In the role of the Healing Parent, the therapist has to expose himself to his patient's mental pain. This is a necessary precondition for the containment of the pain, although, as an outsider, the therapist's mental suffering is not comparable to the original pain of the patient. Containment does not take off the traumatic feelings, experiences or phantasies of the patient, but it changes their emotional quality. In a way, the evil stays as it was, and yet, containment has cut off the sharpest edge of the pain. The problem of evil has been transformed into the problem of suffering.

The basic human container is the mother nursing her baby. When the baby gets hungry, his mind is filled with all kinds of bad feelings. These feelings produce bad phantasies concerning both him and the mother. To put it simply, hunger makes the world, including the mother, look like a place filled with evil beings. And when the mother finally arrives and feeds her baby, oral satisfaction is not the only good thing she gives to her infant. Along with being a good Exciting Parent she also contains the bad feelings and phantasies of her baby, caused by the hunger and the absence of the mother. Good enough nursing does not just mean giving food and changing the diapers. The emotional contact is just as important. At its best, it leads to the containment of the painful mental contents of the baby. The mother assumes then the role of the Healing Parent. The emotional communication between the two is invisible and largely unconscious, but as a result, the baby calms down. His mental distress has disappeared through the process of containment.

Not only therapists and nursing mothers can assume the role of the Healing Parent. This role can be assigned to God, too. In my opinion, this is the most original and fundamental contribution of Christianity to mankind. It is true that within the Christian tradition, God can have the roles of all the other inner parents, too, and sometimes these roles even conceal the features of the Healing Parent. But yet, the revolutionary idea that God's attitude towards man resembles the attitude of the containing Healing Parent towards the inner child, best explains the uniqueness of Christianity.

In my opinion, the basic idea of Christianity lies in the claim that, in Christ, God became man and suffered on the cross in order to contain the violence and evil that plagues mankind. By doing so, the Heavenly Father accepted and took seriously his responsibility for the sufferings of his children. As a cosmic container he exposed himself to the consequences of man's wickedness. He conquered the evil through reconciling it in his incarnate Son. The reconciliation gives a new solution to the problem of evil.

In the atmosphere of the Healing Parent, reconciliation does not mean placating God's wrath through the suffering of Christ, like often has been suggested in the history of theology. On the contrary, it is the wrath, violence and wickedness of man that needs to be reconciled. Unlike the Moral Parent, the Healing Parent knows that punishments and judgements cannot really make man better. The ultimate solution to the problem of evil lies in the will of God to come so close to man and in such a way that man's unbearable mental contents are transferred to God in order

to be contained by him. The cross of Christ is a token of that containment. His resurrection shows that God can bear the burden of man's unbearable mental pain without collapsing under it.

The Healing Parent admits that it cannot satisfy all the needs of the inner child. Here lies its main difference with the Exciting Parent. Even God in the role of the Healing Parent is not omnipotent in the sense that he would fulfil all man's needs. Therefore people expecting miraculous solutions to their problems will be disappointed with him. All troubles do not disappear through faith. But the Heavenly Father in the form of the Healing Parent does not infantilise his children, either. He gives them as much responsibility as they can bear. His omnipotence manifests itself in his ability to contain all the violence, hatred and destructiveness of mankind without revenging or collapsing.

I still want to emphasize that although the inner parents probably have a certain developmental order within the human mind, they do not disappear with the mental development. They live side by side in the unconscious, despite their many contradictions. The same is true of religious communities. In most of them, all these images of God can be found, although there can be different points of emphasis. Even in the mind of an individual, they are activated differently in different situations. But it is important for a therapist or a pastor to be aware of the numerous and even contradicting emotional contents inherent in the word "God". When a person speaks of his Heavenly Father, it is good to have some idea, which kind of Father he is speaking of and what kind of child that Father is having at that particular moment.