Inversion of the Hero Myth: A Psychology and Spirituality of Fatherhood in Masculine Development

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INVERSION OF THE HERO MYTH:
A PSYCHOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY OF FATHERHOOD
IN MASCULINE DEVELOPMENT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
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INSTITUTE OF PASTORAL STUDIES

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father who blessed me in ways I continue to discover and to be grateful for, and I dedicate this work to the countless men who each in their own way have been my mentors and friends.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: INVERSION OF THE HERO

My Father the Hero

Sometime in my early teens on one of the rare nights I can remember my family being home together in the same room, I made a discovery about my father I hadn't expected. I picture him sitting that night in the tan leather chair in our den reading "Business Week", my mom staying busy in the background picking up the clutter, and me laying on the couch watching T.V., bored wishing I'd made better plans for that evening. I don't quite know what caused my mom to share as she did that evening. But knowing as she did the tensions between my dad and me, perhaps she was on a mission to make amends between us when she announced: "I bet your dad has never told you about his being a hero has he? When he was about your age he kept a train from running off its tracks." "No," I began to lite up, "How did you do a thing like that dad?" Careful to contain his pride, my dad explained how he and a friend on a hunting outing were hiking down the famous "Salty Dog" railroad, a rail line that ran down through the Mississippi delta and through his tiny home town of Crenshaw. "Just happened to see one of the rails out of place, so we raced each other back to the station because we knew the noon train was due in only a few minutes. They told us we had stopped a disaster from happening. That's why they had a banquet for us at the Peabody hotel in Memphis, to give us an award." I couldn't believe it; my dad was a hero, a real hero who had saved lives and prevented a train from crashing. It was something I had only imagined doing.

My mother went back to their bedroom to my dad's tall old oak dresser. I remember the top drawer in that dresser; it was a space in my home that had a sacred quality about it. As a young kid I remember looking up at the drawer and wonder what was kept in it. The only thing I knew was there was an old handgun my dad kept for protection which was one of the reasons we weren't permitted to open
it. But in addition to the gun, the drawer held a sacred quality in my mind because of the other items it included. I knew what was in the drawer because there were times, when I was older, when I broke the taboo and looked in that drawer. I rummaged through the items wondering about each of them: a gold pocket watch that was my grandfather's, various lapel pins from the clubs my dad had been a member or president, awards he had won, stacks of old pictures of my father as a boy and relatives now deceased, my dad's old report cards (not all of which had high marks). Why were they significant for my dad, I wondered? What stories were behind each of them? I imagined the events, the names, places, and conversations that might have been a part of my father's past. Who really was my dad, this man I called my father?

My mom pulled out of the drawer the old picture of my father at the Peabody hotel and the banquet given in his honor. There he stood proudly, though a bit awkwardly, his hair cropped and finely groomed, his boyish gauntly body, dressed in a nice suit, between two over weight railroad men each dressed in hair-bone suits with vest and pocket watch chains hanging down, one of them with a cigar. My mom said, "you know, I never thought you looked like your dad, but look how you look like him. I don't believe we could tell the two of you apart." She was right. I was amazed at how much we looked alike. "Handsome guy wasn't he," I joked to cover the surprising sense of pride I was feeling at having been identified as being like my hero dad. At that moment, my dad was a hero and so was I.

As I write this story from my own background and reflect upon it, I become aware of how very much I longed as a young boy to know my dad. I can still feel the pride I felt that night when I discovered he was a hero, how I felt that there was something of greatness about him, something bigger than life and wonderful. There is the feeling of strength and importance that I found in being associated with my dad, the same kind of pride a person might feel had he befriended one
of the truly great personalities of history, like Jefferson or Lincoln. By knowing my dad as a hero, I came to feel something of the goodness of my own growing masculine self. By knowing his strength and success and vitality, I was coming to feel proud of my own vital sense of self and masculinity. It felt good to have been created a man.

There are the thousands of other small ways that he passed on to me his values and prepared me to enter the world as a man. I remember the Saturday nights, he would have us sit down and polish our shoes for church the next morning. There were the trips to the bank with my dad where everybody seems to have known and respected him and how he would use those times to show me the values of handling and saving money. I recall going to Memphis when he took us to a place to buy a snow ball ice machine so we could start our own summer business selling snow cones on the town square during hot Mississippi days. I remember the care he took in teaching me gun safety and hunting trips when we would go into the field to hunt dove with the other men or go out in a boat on a cold winter mornings before the sun was up to try our luck at calling the ducks to our part of the lake.

But something was also missing, a lot was left in the drawer for me to wonder about. As I remember the story, I recall that it was my mother who initiated the conversation and shared the hero story about my dad. It was she, not he, who went to the drawer and removed his picture and shared his
story. My dad's life was a lot like that drawer in his dresser, above me and just out of reach. There was so much about him that I wanted to know, but the mysteries of my father were stored away in a place that I took to be unapproachable. What I don't remember was ever really sitting down face to face hearing him tell me how he felt, what his struggles were, his disappointments and how he got through them. I remember only a few times hearing him talk about when he was a boy and how he and his father had gotten along. I don't remember him sharing very directly how he felt towards me, how he was pleased with me as his son. What was shared was said as we were doing something together and much of that was around the small retail business he had built from scratch. It is said that women have intimacy with one another face to face and men side by side. My experience with my dad would affirm that bit of wisdom. I don't remember feeling physically close to him or ever really looking each other in the eye. I think what stands out most is the feeling that he was so busy much of the time in his drive to provide for his family and to be a successful man, that he really didn't see me. So much of my dad, who he was, his life story, his vulnerable side remained carefully tucked away in the drawer.

While I am aware of the hurt, the loss, and the empty places left in me by that absence, I don't blame my dad. I have come to see that he was quite faithful and well intending as a father. In fact, our relationship was better than that
of many sons and fathers. He was faithful in passing along to me what he understood and believed to be the way one is to be a man, like his own father had passed the torch of masculinity to him, and so on down the generational line. He was living out the current script of how a man ought to be and ought to father his children. As I have come to know myself, I have also come to see the many ways I am like him and have come to a more complete appreciation for him as father.

It is in reflecting on and struggling with my own relationship with my father that has lead me to focus this thesis on images of masculinity and the father and son relationship. It has often been said that all writing is autobiographical, revealing something of the person of the writer. By beginning with something of my own experience I hope to reveal the particularity and bias from which this thesis is written. I write as an upper middle class white man with his own unique father/son relationship that is characterized with its own pitfalls and gifts. I do not pretend that what I will be sharing will be applicable to all men every where. My hope is that my own particular experience will connect with the experience of many other men who are on the same journey of healing and self discovery. I firmly believe that it is in reflecting on our own experiences as men and in dialog with each other that new visions and images of masculinity will arise which are more truthful to the essence of being a human being and male, and more graceful to women,
ourselves, and to the creation. One of the tasks of allowing healing images of masculinity to emerge is for us to call into question present abstractions of masculinity which have become normative in both our unconsciousness and consciousness and let our own experiences call them into question: How have the old images impacted who I am? How are they true to my experience of how I am? How do they allow me to be in touch with a deeper sense of my humanity and how do they cut me off from a vital part of what it means to be human and to being male? And, most importantly for this paper, how have the images of masculinity effected fathering?

**Fallen Heroes**

I suspect that my experience with my dad is not a unique one for many men. We long to know our dads, to know who they are behind the their business suits, their roles as fathers and as spouses to our mothers (for those of us who were fortunate to have a family still in tach). What does it feel like to be them? How have they made their way through the challenges that we also faced as boys? What do their lives have to tell us about how to be men?

One of the thing, I think we want pulled out of our "father's drawer" are something that will instruct us about what it means to be a strong and vibrant man. We long to know something of the hero. If most white middle class men were to think long enough, they could also come up with a hero story
about their dads or some other male figure looked upon with admiration. Every boy dreams at one time or another at being a hero and looks to adult men for role models who approximate the archetype. In recent years a lot has been written about the hero as an archetype for masculinity.¹ Many in the men's movement have written about the hero archetype as being in the marrow of a man's soul, an archetype influencing much of a man's thoughts and actions. The image captures what has become essential qualities of what is understood to be masculine: the powerful, autonomous, aggressive man, armored against every foe, willing to suppress his own feelings and desires and endure what ever pain to go against what would seem impossible odds for the sake of kin and country. The image embodies some of the noblest of virtues to which a man could aspire: courage, sacrifice, endurance, steadfastness, discipline, aggressiveness, a sense of duty, independence, and clear mindedness. These are the qualities and the virtues most of us as men have been taught to value above all others, the ones we have been taught that will be used as the "measure of a man". Only men with these qualities are thought to be the "real" men. We want our leaders to be heroes upon whom we can project and have models back to us the image of what we

¹ While I will be referring to certain types of masculinity which I believe to be commonly held, it is perhaps best to think of their being an almost infinite variety of masculinities which vary from culture to culture, ethnic background, and group to group.
ourselves want to become. Who could imagine our country electing a president (whether man or woman) not exemplifying these qualities in large measure?

And yet, the image of the hero seems to be failing us as a fully adequate image of masculinity. Increasingly, the image seems to offer qualities which express the darkest side of our humanities capabilities. The ideal of the hero has been questioned and blamed as a source of many of the sorrows in our society and in our world. Commenting on the critique of feminist on the masculine image one writer suggest:

We live in time of fallen heroes. The monuments built of men, by men, and for men have tumbled. Men have not just been brought to earth, their strengths put in perspective by their flaws. Even their virtues are suspect vices: power has turned out to be oppressive, strength rigidity, and self-sufficiency and inability to be emotionally close (Betcher 1993, 1).

As women have increasingly gone on the healing journey of defining and understanding themselves, men have painfully found the ways they have sought to define themselves and maintain a privilege position under question. Women are saying they don't need hero's who can rescue them as if they are powerless and helpless damsels. They refuse to be the passive "women in waiting" who define themselves as existing for men who go off on their heroic missions of conquest to prove their masculinity. The quest itself and the ends it serves has been called into question: the injustice of the hierarchal systems which oppresses the poor and woman and calling it the price of getting ahead, the violence of wars to
maintain our economic security, the destruction of the environment brought on by the visions of progress and success, medallions of a man's virility.

Such questions have left men in the painful and confusing position of asking ourselves who we are as men. Sam Keen puts it this way:

Ask most any man, "How does it feel to be a man these days? Do you feel manhood is honored, respected, celebrated?" Those who pause long enough to consider their gut feelings will likely tell you they feel blamed, demeaned, and attacked....Voices from the surrounding darkness shout hostile challenges: 'Men are too aggressive. Too soft. Too insensitive. Too macho. Too power-mad. Too much like little boys. Too wimpy. Too violent. Too obsessed with sex. Too detached to care. Too busy. Too rational. Too lost to lead. Too dead to feel.' Exactly what we are supposed to become is not clear (Keen 1991, 6).

The definitions that once served as the sign post of the ways we had to turn on the way to being a man have been taken down. What is expected of us is less clear. How we are to treat and be treated by the opposite sex is not so well defined. Our roles as husbands and fathers formerly defined as the breadwinners of the family has yet to be replaced by more inclusive images. We don't readily have much in the way of the tradition of the fathers to guide us down the changing terrain.

But I think it is a mistake to imagine that the confusion is only a by-product of feminist critiques and increase awareness on the part of women. While the struggle of women to define themselves in new and liberating ways has
intensified the necessity for men to take a more honest look at themselves, our own experiences suggest that something about our own self definitions of masculinity have not served us well. I think of the story I know about two young school age boys walking home from school.

One boy swung his book satchel aiming to hit the other boy, who would ducked just in time to avoid being hit. The boy swinging his book bag yelled at the other kid, "your chicken!" The other boy straitened himself up (determine that he was a real man and wasn't about to be called a chicken) just in time to receive his blow from the bag that knocked him to the ground. He looked up smugly at the boy who had just knocked him down and said: "I told you I wasn't chicken (source unknown).

We have paid a price for being men who live by the myth of the hero. We have in fact been willing to take a lot of blows, sacrificing our own well being for the sake of attempting to live up to the traditional images of masculinity. For one thing, to be the hero requires a man to be willing to suffer physically, to submit himself without regard to the well being of his body and to ignore any emotions which might hinder his achieving his goals. Our bodies have suffered in the cause to be "real men". Men have often imaged their bodies as machines or instruments built to get the job done. We can visualize this most readily in the athletes who are paid mega-amounts of money to amaze us with their heroic feats. Their bodies are to be forged and disciplined under the directives of the mind and will power to serve the purposes of the hero. They have been conditioned to treat it as something lower and instrumental, as something to
be bridled for some other purpose than itself. It is not uncommon to hear an athlete refer to his body as a "machine".

Many retire around thirty five years of age, proud over the majesty of their feats, though their bodies broken and worn down as the cost for their bits of glory.

The athletes who visualize the image of the hero is only an outward and visible sign of the many other ways men have struggled to be heroic. This is most often experienced in our culture in the desire and fight for progress and success at almost any cost. Sam Keen writes about how corporate America has become thought of as a battle zone in which men have develop a "paranoid" view of reality, where our economic life has been organized around military metaphors like willpower, assault, control, and the enemy with success as the final and only objective. In such a setting a man on his heroic quest must sacrifice much of what it means to be human on behalf of the objectives of the corporation. He becomes

...a being who has been neutralized, degendered, rendered subservient to the laws of the market....

...Our fragile, tender, wild and succulent bodies are being deformed to suit the needs of the body corporation (Keen 1991, 62-65).

The value of relationships, of loving and being love, of simply "being" rather than "doing" is sacrificed. Both soul and body are sacrificed as a cost of being heroic.
The effects of being the hero can be seen in the statistics of men's health. Men are less attuned to disease and the wearing away of their bodies under the stresses of being a man. It is not surprising that men have a life expectancy seven years less than that of women (Nelson 1988, 13). James Nelson in his book on male sexuality and spirituality points out that nine out of ten leading causes of death among men are related to the masculine role. Adolescent boys are taught that they must prove their virility by making it with a girl, resulting in unwanted, and often fatherless children. Other rites of male passage also involve proving of manhood by intoxication which leads to an unusually high rate of auto accidents and deaths (Nelson 1988, 12).

**Hero Fathers and Rejected Sons**

There is a growing consciousness among men around these concerns and a search to find new meaning out of our own experience, to do what women have been doing for some time now: taking seriously our own individual experiences and to listen to our bodies and emotions rather than being enslaved by the traditional masculine images which may or may not serve us well. An essential aspect of this search is the connection between how the predominant images of masculinity have had an effect on father and son relationships. For it is primarily through the father that a son comes to identify and to learn much of what it means to be masculine. From the father a son
learns to experience himself as distinctly masculine: how a man feels, thinks, and senses the world, how a man relates to other men and to women, how he can make a place for himself in the world.

One of the things men are discovering when they take the path of introspection is the empty space left in their souls by the absence of their fathers. The question that many men find on their lips today is: "Father, where were you?" Many men are waking up to the pain and anger at recognizing that their father's literally were absent from the home and their lives much of the time or they were emotionally removed from the family. They are becoming aware of father's absence which often was experienced as father's rejection. As one writer describes the experience of many men:

...a disproportionate number of males are rejected kids. Not only do boys feel abandoned by their preoccupied, psychologically distant fathers, but they are also subject to the anger of their unhappy mothers. There is a good deal of sociological evidence that points toward rejection being a central issue in males; from the higher incidence of alcoholism and substance abuse, to much higher incidence of suicide, to men's general isolation (Vogt & Sirridge 1991, 8).

Much attention in traditional psychological theories has been on the importance of the mother/child relationship, but more recently psychologist are beginning to recognize the importance of the father's role in childhood development. When father is gone or not emotionally available to his family there is the direct impact of missed empathy on the part of
father and the child, but also the impact on the family system in which the lack of a strong husband/father results in the triangulation of children. The loss of a fully available father affects masculine growth in a particular way. Boys gain their masculine identities in large part from their fathers. Boys need fathers who can help them feel and experience what it is like to be masculine. When fathers are absent or not emotionally available, when there is not "good enough fathering," boys are left with a wounded sense of the masculine, cutting them off from the essential goodness and virtues of their masculinity. What they are give by their fathers is a distorted sense of what it means to be male, a distortion that they in turn will perpetuate because it is the only understanding they have of masculinity.

In this thesis, I will reflect on this role of fathers in the development of their sons' masculinity. I will show how the absences of fathers in their sons' development contributes to the development of an inflated heroic masculinity, while the presence of fathers in their sons' development enables the development of a healthy and secure sense of masculinity that is authentic, can be meaningfully related and involved in a transcendent life purpose (chapter 2). I will reflect upon how our dominate theological notions of God in a traditional masculine spirituality are projections of the heroic images of masculinity (chapter 3). I will offer new possibilities for a male spirituality by suggesting that the life, death, and
resurrection of Jesus inverts the heroic myth and creates new and more holistic images of God as Father. These images can support healing in the father/son relationship and healthier images of masculinity (chapter 4). I will close with a review of some of the implications of a new masculinity for the ministry of pastoral counseling with men (chapter 5).

What I will be saying in these reflections on masculinity and the father/son relationship is in dialogue with the voices of many other writers, each with their own concerns around men's issues. It will be helpful to distinguish my usage of a few common terms and to draw clearer boundaries and limitations for this project. One of the terms that requires some comment is "masculinity" and "images of masculinity". One of the dangers identified by many feminist in regards to the patriarchy is how men have used their positions of power to define what is "normative" and "acceptable" for everybody else. This is one of the dangers of offering new images of masculinity, that what is offered will be understood and used in an oppressive way to divide persons into groups labeled as "normal" or "aberrant", into groups that negate, or even worse, belittles the experience of some men because their way of being a man does not fit the norm. This is precisely the problem men have been confronted with in the attempts to live up to the current dominant images of masculinity. In offering new images of masculinity, I recognize this inherent danger. I agree with Howard Eilberg-Schwartz who says, "Pinning down
the essence of being a woman or man has proven impossible (Eilberg-Schwartz 1994, 19)." No image of masculinity can reflect accurately the experience of being a man in one culture, much less the experience of men in other cultures.

But it is equally foolish to imagine that anyone can have a sexuality that is apart from any cultural images of masculinity. Masculinity is largely psychologically and culturally defined. It refers to the subjective experience of being a man and to the social evaluation of being masculine. We are created as persons who have our identity in community with others; we can only understand ourselves in relationship with others. The problem is not that we receive our understanding of masculinity from the culture around us, but that our understanding of masculinity no longer serve to connect us to our body experience of being male and in meaningful ways of relating to others and the creation. A health masculinity is one which acknowledges and celebrates all aspects of being male. It does not needlessly cut us off from essential feelings and needs, from our experiences of ourselves. A healthy masculinity serves to connect us and to find commonality and purpose with others. It will help us together to respond to the circumstances of our times in ways that serve the common good.

I agree with Sam Keen who writes about the rich history of masculinities which "form the strata of the male psyche (Keen 1991, 111)." As Keen sees it, masculinities change and
evolve as creative responses called forth by contemporary needs. But each form of masculinity reaches a point when it's counterproductive, when it no longer serves the common need as once intended (Keen 1991, 111). I will be arguing in this paper that there are aspects of the hero myth which no longer serves us. It is not that the hero myth needs to be abandoned entirely as some have suggested. It is a myth which is a part of our psyche as men, and I doubt could be dispelled even if we desired to be rid of it. As Joseph Campbell writes, the hero is a fundamental myth behind most religions and cultures. It is a description in its many forms of the journey the ego take to reach enlightenment and fulfillment, a process of departure (separation), initiation, and return (fulfillment) (Campbell 1949, 30).

What concerns me is the form of expression the hero myth has taken in our current time. As it is often experienced by men, the hero myth produces a results that is the opposite of what it is intended to produce. I will be showing how in an individualistic culture the myth, as it is understood, has served to disconnect men from themselves, from meaningful relationship, and a vital sense of vocation. It has had a particularly harmful effect on fathering as it has produced men who are not fully connected to their inter-emotional life and needs and remote and distant from their families. The hero myth serves us well as men, in so far as it calls forth the qualities of courage, sacrifice, endurance, and
determination, but it fails us in so far as it disembodies us and disconnects us from one another and meaningful vocation.
The Masculinity Mask

I met "Jim" on one of my evangelism outings after he had graced our church with a visit one Sunday morning. I must have caught him off guard that day, stopping by his house as I did with out a call. When I approached him, he was outside on his patio hovered over a barbecue grill holding a beer in one hand and flipping burgers with a spatula in the other. "Hey buddy, how are you?", he said, greeting me like a commissioned salesman nearing the end of the month. He quickly put down his beer to shake my hand, squeezing it so firmly it felt like he was going to make another hamburger patty out of it.

We talked that evening longer than I had expected. Talking with Jim was something like listening to a Dale Carnegie speaker. He told one of those form jokes everybody has heard before, chuckled loudly just in case I didn't, and then proceeded to list confidently the long list of achievements which proceeded his move to Tupelo. "Had a factory that employed over 200 people; We'd put out 2000 units a day...." Then the stories about all the money he had made; the people he had rubbed elbows with; the estate home and how much money he had spent remodeling it; the woman he had impressed enough to earn her hand in marriage.

Then came my question: "Jim, how did you end up here?" I asked it, as we stood just outside his rather cramped apartment, a conventional apartment with one of those cheap plywood doors that has been splintered and that someone had attempted to whitewash with a coat of inexpensive paint. A long pause. For a second Jim looked as if he had gone else where, like my question had taken him far away. "I got ripped off", he finally said starkly. He proceeded to tell me how his "trusted" partner of 15 years had taken the business from him by accusing him of fraud and had been sleeping with his wife. "Nothing left.....nothing..." Another
moment of silence, that long distant stare again, this time with his eyes filled to their brim like a challis ready to overflow but holding steady. In the silence, just for that moment, for a flash, I thought I was in the presence of a different person; it was as if Jim had quickly exited, and there stood a young vulnerable little boy, his pain and his needs written all over his expressions. He coughed once and then again, louder and more drawn out. Jim was back. "I am gone to build me a new factory here. I'll double what we did before."

I thought of this story of Jim when I began to think about the issue of masculine development with which this chapter is concerned. It seems to me that male development often results in the loss of a man's true inner self, especially the vulnerable side that is so evident in a little boy. When I think of Jim now, I try to keep with me that glimpse of a little boy I briefly saw behind the facade of the successful business man's persona he so desperately needed to uphold. It is sad that the boy could not have graced our visit longer. I wasn't surprised when I learned later that Jim's father had beat him as a child and then left them so poor that his mother had to put him in a children's home where there were more beatings.

We all begin as vulnerable children, with an abundance of feelings and needs, with an authentic self which knows how to freely express itself. Our core self at birth is naturally authentic and seeking of connection to others. Somewhere along the way many men, I expect all of us to some degree, learn, as Jim did, that being a man means leaving parts of this vulnerable child behind. The key primary relationships
required to help us nurture and develop our core self into a mature self capable of meaningful self expression and vital mutual connection do not fully provide the support we need. We can see this in a more radical way in the case of Jim whose father beat him and abandoned him, causing him to develop a defensive structure around the core vulnerable and relational self.

Most traditional theories of human development encourage a repression of a more vulnerable and relational side of ourselves as men. They reflect the biases of the hero's concern with transcending the normal limits of our humanity and the hero's pre-occupation with autonomy. There is a tendency of theories of development to assume that the goal of development is to become a separate individual (Bergman 1991, 12). In fact, in traditional theories of development pathology is often described as an inability to stand alone, as an individual self. The roots of this belief can be found in Freud who believed that the journey to maturity involved a battle of the maturing ego to rise above the consuming forces of the id. A mature ego is able to stand over and against the forces of the psyche which threaten to overpower a person into a regressive state of maternal bonding. Freud viewed the early bonding with mother as a threat to the autonomous self who must be rescued from such bondage by fathers who empower their children to "grow up" and rise above these regressive forces (Keller 1986, 100-106). Such an idea views our
essential nature and drive to connect to others with suspicion.

A more appropriate goal for development recognizes that our core self is essentially good in that it empowers us to be connected and meaningfully related to others. Appropriate parenting, parenting that is empathetically attuned, can help the development of an ego which is able to be mutually interrelated. The self is celebrated as having its own inherent worth and boundaries while growing in its capacity to be meaningfully, mutually, and responsibly related to others and to a sense of greater purpose.

Such a goal is more commensurate with our human nature and the human condition. We are incarnate beings born into human communities. Such a statement implies that theories of development must account not only for the beginning of our lives but also the end of our lives. And it also implies that theories of development must reflect the essential need we have for relationship and the need to live productive, meaningful lives. Such goals are not just an aside for a human life or something one can gain once becoming an autonomous individual but the purpose of health development. Not to recognize our interrelatedness is to repress our own deep needs for connection and to deny our responsibility for the relationships we have (Keller 1986, 9).
In this chapter, I want to review some of the current writings and debates concerning masculine development, to draw from these writings new understandings of masculine development which support a more holistic and relational view of masculine development. I want to point towards an understanding of development in which the heroic qualities of manhood are celebrated in a way that supports our humanity and the need for connection. I will be suggesting that a healthier masculinity is developed in boys whose fathers or male substitutes interact meaningfully with their sons at an early age. Fathers are needed by their sons for masculine identification and to help them negotiate changes in relationship to the mother. I will be showing that men in general have a more difficult time establishing their sexual identity because of changes in relationship with their mothers, but that the ability to negotiate these changes while maintaining a connection helps boys develop a masculinity that is comfortable with what is often called his "feminine side" and with being in the process of a relationship.² Problems

² When I talk about the feminine side of a man I do so hesitantly. What I am referring to are the attributes that are commonly assigned to the female sex. There is a danger that dividing human attributes into male or female attributes risk falling into the trap of declaring two essentially different complementary natures. This can be divisive and oppressive as such narrow descriptions can be used to limit and confine a person's sexuality and experience. This is the case when women accuse men of being basically aggressive by nature (i.e. destructive) and when men say women are the gentler sex (i.e. weaker). It makes more sense to recognize that there are men whose aggressive object representations come from their mothers and more gentle object representations
in the development of a secure masculinity occur when boys are not allowed to celebrate their developing masculinity and when boys are taught to maintain a reactive stance towards their mothers and the so called "soft" emotional and nurturing side of themselves. A kind of false masculinity, a hyper-hero masculinity, is developed to cover insecurities around the boy's masculinity.

**Becoming a Man: The Struggle to Secure Manhood**

More recent theories of development than early psychodynamic theory as seen in Freud has shifted the focus away from the emphasis on the achievement of an individual, autonomous self to a more relational view of development. Object relations theories, for example, have emphasized a more relational understanding of development in suggesting that what motivates us as human being is not simply drive satisfaction but the desire for relationship. Theories of development have also shifted from emphasis on Freud's oedipal period to the pre-oedipal period and the essential relationship of a child to his/her mother.

come from father. Perhaps we do tend to learn certain qualities from one sex rather than the other, but I believe it is more of a results of cultural force rather than innate differences. However, I do believe that our experience of our bodies will define to some extent our emotional experiences (e.g. an exposed sexual organ for men affects a man's experience of vulnerability as will the phallus affect how men feel about assertiveness.)
In theories of masculine development the focus of much of the debate has been on boy's changing relationship to his mother which come about as boys seeks to gain a sense of their masculine identity. Ralph Greenson, for example, believes that masculine development involves a shift from identification with mother to identification with father. He sees problems in developing a healthy sense of masculinity as being related to a pre-oedipal period when the boy is required "to abandon his identification with the mother...and to identify, instead with the father... (Segal 1990, 73). Greenson believes that such a shift from mother to father leaves men with a more insecure sense of their sexuality. This insecurity can be identified in men's envy of women, an envy for what men have lost. A man's contempt for the feminine is but a facade for a covert envy of the feminine (Segal 1990, 74).

I believe Greenson offers insights that are true to a man's experience. He offers some explanations for the insecurity many men feel concerning their sexuality. The need for young boys to prove their manhood is well established in our culture. It is a dominant theme that continues to play itself out well into the adult years of many if not most men. When I was growing up a guy would do almost anything to avoid being called a "sissy" or a "mama's boy", even if it meant doing something like climbing the town water tower late at night to prove he is not a "sissy" but is "man enough" (a rite
of initiation when I was a boy). As adult men it is not uncommon to hear comments like:

Stand up straight and act like a man. Face it like a man. Have they sent me a boy to do a man's job? Am I man enough for her? If only I felt more like a man (Fogel, Lane, Liebert 1986, 3).

The popular writer and novelist, Norman Mailer is speaking for most men when he says: "Being a man is the continuing battle of one's life (Mailer 1959, 222)." A man "can hardly ever assume he has become a man (Mailer, 1971, 168)." Such a need to secure our manhood may not be a theme unique to our culture. In a cross cultural study, David Gilmore describes this need to prove one's masculinity as a central component of a man's experience. There is a constantly recurring notion that real manhood...is not a natural condition that comes about spontaneously through biological maturation but rather is a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds. (Gilmore 1990, 11)

The Men's Movement: Reclaiming Masculinity

In many ways helping men win their manhood against powerful odds has been the theme of the men's movement since its inception in the 1970's. The men's movement began at a time when many men, essentially, middle-class white men, were feeling increasingly insecure about the meaning and value of being a man. It has sought to define the journey a man must take to secure a healthy masculinity. At the heart of the men's movement is the conviction that a man must embark upon
a heroic quest to establish his manhood. This involves first and foremost a break in the primal bond boys have with their mothers, a break which shifts the boy from the maternal matrix into the world of men. Mother and the feminine are viewed with a certain amount of suspicion, as having the power to trap or hinder a boy's development into manhood. Robert Bly, among others, points to primitive cultures which understood the necessity of boys being taken away from their mothers for a period of time in order for them to be in the world of men and learn the ways of a man (Bly 1990, 14-15). He believes that only such a break in the mother-son bond can free the boy to develop his masculinity. Robert Moore describes this break in the boy's life as a time when the boy's ego must die and be replaced by a man's ego (Moore, Gillette 1991, 14). Failure of the boy to effectively make this disconnection and reorientation is understood as the source of insecure, destructive expressions of masculinity. Moore says that men who failed to negotiate this break become either mother-bound, weak, ineffectual or they become aggressive, reactive, misogynist who forever must be proving their masculinity (Moore, Gillette 1991, 14). In either case such men is a lack of an authentic masculine self and an inability to relate meaningfully with either men or women.

Another of the central claims of the men's movement is that every boy and man has in his psyche a powerful masculine energy which compels his development into a man. This energy
can serve to empower and guide a man's journey into manhood if it can be harnessed in the service of the developing masculine ego. This creative hero energy gives a man a sense of his competency; it allows him to relate effectively in a hostile world. Moore refers to this energy as the hero energy which can guide the boy and enable him to break free of the maternal bond:

The hero enables him to establish a beachhead against the overwhelming power of the unconscious (much of which for men, at least, is experienced as feminine, as mother). The hero enables the boy to begin to assert himself and define himself as distinct from all others, so that ultimately, as a distinct being, he can relate to them (women) fully and creatively (Moore, Gillette 1990, 40).

Such energy can only be accessed and used properly when it is celebrated through ritual in the community of older men who confirm and support the boy on the path to manhood. The men's movement is especially concerned with reasserting the role of fathers in helping sons to access the deep masculine energy. Fathers who have tapped the rich vein of masculine energy are present for their sons who learn from their fathers how a man harnesses the masculine energy. For Robert Bly, this hero energy resides as a deep archetype at the core of a man's soul and is what he calls the "deep masculine" or the "wild man". Such an energy is not to be found in the feminine or in mother's world, but in the realm of men:

We have to accept the possibility that the true radiant energy in the male does not hide in, reside in, or wait for us in the feminine realm, nor in the macho/John Wayne realm, but in the magnetic
field of the deep masculine (Bly 1990, 8). Fathers impart something of this radiant energy to their son's by the time they spend with them, teaching them the ways a man feels, thinks, and acts to establish himself in the world. As Bly says, this is not just a rational, conscious learning; something deeper is at work:

The son's body - not his mind - receives and the father gives this food at a level far below consciousness...His cells receive some knowledge of what an adult masculine body is...It begins to grasp the song that adult male cells sing, and how charming, elegant, lonely, courageous, half-shamed male molecules dance (Bly 1990, 93).

What Bly and others in the men's movement clearly hope to accomplish is an affirmation of the goodness of being men in a time when men increasingly feel attacked, belittled, and irrelevant. They do this by asserting that the masculinity that is criticized by feminism is not the true masculine, but an aberrant form of the "deep masculine". At our very essence, there resides a heroic man who has great power to achieve much that is good and worthy of admiration. We can discover this hero only through the presence and involvement of other men, and especially, through a reclaiming of fatherhood. These men provide for separation from the maternal world and initiation into the ways of manhood.

While these writers encourage separation and individuation from the feminine and an implicit mistrust of the feminine is often implied, they explicitly deflect the blame for men's problems from women and towards the absence of
fathers and men who can provide young boys the needed models and rites of initiation into a secure masculinity. Sam Keen concurs with the absence of fathering as the sources of many men's problems, but he wishes to bypass the blaming of either men or women by reframing the problems of father's absence to historical and sociological factors. The industrial revolution encourages a separation of fathers from their sons which does not allow for the kind of daily interactions and guidance that is so essential to passing on a constructive understanding of manhood. In more modern times sociological factors such as a work ethic which encourages sacrifices of the self for the sake of the company and the gods of performance and success have left fathers with little space for the development of a more vulnerable self so essential for the kind of nurturing needed by young sons. As a results of these factors and other factors, sons are left with poor father substitutes such as equally lost and confused peers and the twisted values of culture and its institutions to provide for informal initiations into aberrant forms of masculinity. What boys are taught is a warrior mentality which prepares the psyche for a type of heroism that does not allow for meaningful relationships and life giving vocations.

The men's movement as represented by Bly, Moore, Gillette, and Keen has been criticized by feminist as a veiled attempt to soften and repackage traditional male domination. Susan Bordo calls the work of Robert Bly and Sam Keen
"sensationalistic best selling rejections of masculinity (Bordo 1994, 278)." Such writers "mythologize female sexual control over men and so are unable to move despite their own avowed intentions beyond reassertion of male potency and privilege (Bordo 1994, 278-279)." She points to the mixed metaphors of Sam Keen such as "fierce gentlemen", "manly grief", and "virile fear" as pumping up the "images of the new man with a promise of phallic mastery (Bordo 1994, 279)." The men's movement as represented by these writers is seen by many feminist as a way of shoring up the hurt male ego which has been injured by being confronted with the reality of patriarchal abuses. The idea of a deep masculine and of a hero energy simply mask deeper male insecurities and dodges accountability for the problems caused by patriarchal images of masculinity.

Many of Bordo's concerns and the concerns of other feminist need to be taken seriously. I believe, and will be arguing, that this is especially true in her concern for the degree to which a man's identity is defined in reaction against the feminine. Such a reactive definition of masculinity does encourage men to denigrate and oppress women out of fear of the feminine. But I believe something more positive and helpful is being offered by many in the men's movement. No one is served by a masculinity which has been severed of its vitality, whose image is no longer celebrated, valued, and respected. This is especially true when fathering
is devalued and what little boys are left with is an image of masculinity which is primarily derogatory. The men's movement at its best has recognized that the dark expressions of masculinity must be confronted as destructive to women and to men as well. They encourage men to discover something deeper in themselves that is valuable and worthy of respect. The "deep masculinity" and the "heroic energy" points to the valued aspects of being a man.

Especially in the work of Sam Keen, there is an attempt to reclaim many of the aspects of an authentic masculine self. When Sam Keen speaks of "fierce gentlemen", "manly grief", and "virile fear" he is affirming male experiences which have often been denied a place in a man's image of himself. Keen wants to reconnect men to the earth, to our core humanity, while celebrating our ability to transcendent our lives and practice vocations which will value and nourish the creation. He seeks to move us beyond the constraining definitions of masculinity, the aberrant forms of the hero which no longer serve us as men and discover a deeper, more enduring meaning to manhood.

Nowhere is this reclaiming and celebrating of the goodness of our masculinity more needed than in fathering. Increasingly men are fathering children without any sense of responsibility for being actively involved fathers. Blankenhorn writes:
A generation ago, an American child could reasonably expect to grow up with his or her father. Today, an American can reasonably expect not to...Never before in this country have so many children been voluntarily abandoned by their fathers. (Blankenhorn 1995, 14)

Blankenhorn goes on to suggest that there is a diminution in the public mind of the importance of fathers due in part to the industrial revolution but also due to the shift to expressive individualism, the idea that your basic responsibility is to yourself with less responsibility towards others. In the absence of fathers, young boys are left only to imagine what their fathers are like and as a result what being a man is truly like. Furthermore, if their mothers nurture resentments towards absent fathers or towards men in general, the boy is given an image of masculinity which has been denigrated; he is taught that there is something fundamentally wrong with his sexual identity. He will long to find images of masculinity which he can believe in and celebrate as good. These images more times than not will come from the culture and may be images of the hyper-heroic which alienate the boy from his true self and from a realistic image of manhood.

The men's movement at its best has recognized and seeks to reclaim the important role fathers play in their son's development. They have shown the essential role of men in being present to model a secure sense of masculinity. Without the presence and nurture of fathers, boys are left on their own to figure out what it means to be a man and often times
develop a kind of pseudo-masculinity to mask their insecure sense of manhood. Such a masculinity is reactive against the feminine outside themselves and what is perceived to be feminine within themselves.

My own experience in working with youth affirms these insights. I consistently found that those boys whose fathers were not present suffered a deep father hunger, a hunger they sought to fill through almost any male figure who would show the slightest interest in them, whether such men provided healthy role models or destructive ones. They had a greater need to act out their masculinity and to test and prove their masculinity. There was a need to idealize and find strength in another human being who could hold up a standard of masculinity and a goal for them to live towards. I found that positive role models provided them with a securer sense of their masculinity.

**Integrating the Masculine with the Feminine**

One of the more helpful articles written on the role of fathers in helping their sons develop a secure masculinity is by John Munder Ross, "Beyond the Phallic Illusion: Notes on Man's Heterosexuality". Ross gives a more indepth psychodynamic examination of masculine development which, unlike the Bly or Keen, focuses on early developmental issues as well as adolescence developmental issues. Ross writes about men who are frightened of fatherhood and the soft
sentiments it creates and who react and define their masculinity against women. These men are unable to experience or acknowledge the "softer" aspects of themselves or to be in mutual relationships, because they did not have emotionally available fathers. Lynne Segal in summarizes Ross' developmental view says:

Sons of fathers who are absent emotionally, who act like oppressors, or are entirely inhibited and ineffectual compared with a powerful mother (especially in relationship where the mother disparages or fears men), are led to create their own exaggerated, artificial, brittle and aggressive version of manhood as a protection against their identification with the powerful mother (Segal 1990, 75).

Ross traces the role of the father in the earliest years of a boy's growth in developing his masculinity. While in the first weeks of life the boy is symbiotically attached to the mother, Ross points to evidence that the father is already recognized as someone different from strangers. Furthermore, the young infant begins to differentiate between mothers and fathers by the kind of responses they offer with mother tending to "envelop and equilibrate, soothing calming a baby..." and father "engaged in more intrusive, gross motor, high-keyed modes of interaction for the most part (Ross 1986, 63)."

The development of a core masculine identity occurs during the second half of the second year as the boy recognizes anatomical sex differences. This awareness occurs at the time the boy is just beginning to disengage from his
mother, though still dependent upon her for physical and emotional nourishment. The boy "comes to cherish his masculinity, taking great pride in his penis as its prime, visible, and most sensible manifestation, at the same time he strives to be and be like mother.... (Ross 1986, 64)."

Fathers are especially important at this transition in the boy's life, as they provide male identification which encourages the boy's masculinity while providing nurture to the boy in addition to that of the mother's. Such identification continues into the phallic phase between two and three years of age, when the boy begins to parade himself aggressively, taking pride in his ability to penetrate and "wield an intrusive weapon (Ross, 1986, 64)." It is essential during this time of phallic narcissism for the father and the mother to appreciate their son's displays while gently helping their son recognize his limits.

According to Ross, this is a stage that boys need to go through to form a secure sense of their masculinity. The danger for the boy's development is that he remains stuck in place, that the "sexual identity of a man remains bound up with conquest, even violence, with self-inflation through self-display (Ross 1986, 64)." This can happen when the mother has a fearful and hostile attitude towards men that is reflected in her belittling or failing to acknowledge the boy's narcissistic needs or when the father is not present or somehow available for his son to idealize and identify with.
Ross offers a case study of a man whose mother was the classic example of an abrasive and castrating mother and whose father failed to stimulate and appreciate the boy's aggression or to be an effective husband. The man's masculinity became "hypermorphied and repressively clung to in an effort to 'disidentify from mother... ' (Ross 1984, 62)". This man was unable to enter into or enjoy a generative relationship because anything feminine from without or within himself remained a threat to his insecure masculinity.

Ross continues to trace the boy's masculine development through Freud's oedipal phase in which the boy competes with the father for the mother's affection. Such a tension is resolved only when the boy can again identify with the mother in relationship with the father and passively surrender to the father and receive "his father's manly fortitude (Ross 1984, 66)." As the boy's identification with the father deepens, the boy learns through the father both to relate meaningfully to the feminine and to modify his sexual aggression into a source of potential sustenance and generativity. The boy develops a comfort with his own feminine aspects and with being related to women because he has learned to appreciate and feel secure with his own masculine self through his identification with his father. There is an integration of both his maternal ambitions and his masculine self.
Like the men's movement, Ross shows how important it is for fathers to help young boys to feel and know that there is something heroic, fundamentally good and valuable about their masculine identity. While he does not talk in terms of archetypes, of the "deep masculine" or the "hero energy", there is the boy's early relationship to the primal father. Such an object relatedness to a masculine figure can provide the boy with needed masculine self-objects that support a positive feeling about his masculine sexuality. Furthermore, this masculine self is one that is defined by the relationship with the father and is not defined in reaction to mother and the feminine. On the contrary, healthy masculinity results in the ability to be meaningfully related to the feminine where maternal and paternal identifications have been integrated.

Ross also gives an explanation of how masculinity can lose its connection to a vital self and the ability to be in mutual relationship. A pseudo-masculinity (which he calls hyper-trophied) that is reactionary to women and to the softer emotions (as needed in fathering) results from failed development when mothers belittle their son's masculine self and fathers are absent for identification and needed male support. His client in the case study experienced such deficits in parenting and was unable in his adult life to even enjoy housework for fear of being a "sissy" or to experience closeness in his sexual experiences as it threatened his masculine security (Ross 1984, 62). These are the negative
expressions of the hero which leave men in a state of alienation from the self and meaningful connection.

While Ross's study of masculine development offers addition support for the reclaiming of fatherhood, that is such a key part of the men's movement, he differs considerably in describing the importance of the son's identification with the mother and the feminine for healthy development. In healthy development, connection with the feminine is never completely lost. The boy can never really be said to disconnect from the feminine, because the boy develops the ability to care for himself by taking into himself his identifications with his mother's nurture and power. Even the shift to identification with the father is enabled by the boy's identification with the mother through the boy's passive receptivity to his father's "manly fortitude" (Ross 1984, 66). Through identification with father, the boy is able to make the shift from "being like mom" to relating to mother and the feminine "as dad does", in ways that are generative (Ross 1984, 66).

I believe that Ross's views balance some of the views of writers, like Robert Bly, in the men's movement who support movement away from the feminine in order for boys to secure a firm sense of his masculinity. Words and phrases like "disconnect", "establishing his independence", being "severed", and "isolated from mother", are the common language of many men's writers for describing a boy's movement away
from the mother matrix into the world of men. The process is
a linear one: in order to relate to the feminine boys must
disconnect from the feminine. The positive intent of such
messages is that boys do need to make a firm shift from
identification with mother to identification with father in
order to develop their masculinity. A lack of fathering and
guidance can leave boys "mother bound" and insecure about
their masculinity.

Yet I believe the men's movement and it's emphasis on
separation from the mother can contribute to men's isolation
from the true self and from relationships. There are problems
created when men's reactivity to the feminine becomes a base
for defining one's masculinity. Do we not continue to cut
ourselves off from much of the self-nurture and support which
has come from identification with mother? One wonders when
you read much of the material of Bly and Keen what role mother
identification has in a man's life because the impression is
given that every thing a man needs is to be supplied by the
"deep masculine" or the "heroic energy". Furthermore, one
wonders how such an absolute emphasis on disconnection and
independence can help a man be able to be meaningfully related
and connected to the feminine. If disconnection has become
the bases for defining one's self, how can men grow up to know
what it means to live and be in the process of a relationship?
It is not difficult to see how many of the ideas of the men's
movement can be used to justify the kind of pseudo-masculinity
they have criticized.

The concern over separation receives much attention in the writing of Stephen Bergman in "Men's Psychological Development: A Relational Perspective". Bergman believes as I have proposed that the goal of healthy development is not independence but the ability to be in meaningful relationship. He indicates that men are as relational as women, that the core need to be related, to nurture and be nurtured, is evidenced just as it is for girls in the first three years of boy's development in the close bond to the mother. But around the age of three there is a shift in the relational context which requires a disconnection from the relationship with the mother, which is also a disconnection from "the very process of growth in relationship, a learning about turning away from the whole relational mode (Bergman 1991, 4)." Bergman sees this break as a primary violation that results in many problems for men, the institution of family, and our culture. Boys never really learn how to be in process of relationship with one another. What they learn is disconnection and the need to establish one's self as different from others, especially the feminine. Difference implies comparison and comparison means being better than or worse than someone else. What results for a man is the need to prove how he is special and competent. Rather than being in the process of a relationship men learn to earn their love: "The fantasy is that by achieving, a man will win love (Bergman 1991, 5)."
Men also come to fear the feminine as a threat to the masculinity they have so desperately worked to achieve. Bergman writes about a kind of relationship dread that many men have developed. Men both want to be related, to nurture and be nurtured, but fears doing so will risk losing the masculinity he has achieved or risking experiencing again the painful break with mother and the feminine (Bergman 1991, 8).

Bergman does not offer a more detailed descriptive account for how men develop their masculinity (as does Ross), how the shifting from mother to father identification can enhance a boy's masculinity in a positive way. His concern is to counter the negative effect of discontinuity in relationship to the feminine which he says is culturally created and maintained "in the name of growth" (Bergman 1991, 4). He does discuss the role of father as being essential for the boy's development of a healthy and secure masculinity. Father's can offer nurture to their sons in a way that reinforces a positive view of their son's own nurturing side. Furthermore, fathers can model and help their sons be in the process of a relationship both by the way in which they exemplify this in relationship to the boy's mother and by helping their sons negotiate the changes in relationship to their mothers. The healthiest development of a boy's sexual identity results only when fathers are present to help the boy negotiate this changing relationship to the feminine while developing his own masculinity (Bergman 1991, 6).
Bergman and Ross both reveal the importance of early fathering as essential to the development of health masculinity. Some of the problems which result in a man's need to define himself over the against the feminine are avoided when fathers are a vital part of a young boy's development. These views offer a way to affirm the development of a heroic sense of a masculine self which are holistic and inclusive of a positive place for the feminine.

This role for fatherhood is supported by earlier writings by feminist object-relations writers like Nancy Chodorow. She believes that in accordance with traditional object relations theory, boys must deny intimacy, dependence, and tenderness with the mother to develop his masculinity. Chodorow writes:

A boy represses those qualities he takes to be feminine inside himself, and rejects and devalues women and whatever he considers to be feminine in the social world (Chodorow 1978, 181).

This is the source for an impersonal and aggressive masculinity, which Chodorow argues is supported by the fact that such a masculinity is functional for society in its support of a capitalist world view. Shared parenting in which the father plays a nurturing role as well as the mother would mean that the boy did not have to react against the feminine in order to secure his masculinity. In such mutual parenting, men would learn a masculinity from their fathers which is comfortable with intimacy (Chodorow 1978, 181).
What is noticeable when reading each of the writers on men's development offered in this chapter is an agreement on one essential point: the key to healing in which men develop a more authentic self, and can be more meaningful related, and involved in meaningful vocation depends largely upon a recovery of fathering in the life of their sons. Each writer has shown the essential role fathers play in providing for identification for their sons. From fathers sons learn to deeply value and respect their own sexuality. But fathering which does not allow for the son to feel secure in relationship to the 'softer' emotions and sentiments and to the feminine continues to encourage the development of men who are destined to transcend their own experience and deny themselves the fulfillment of the very needs which make us human and tie us to a commonality with one another. We need heroic fathers. But we need hero fathers who are grounded in their own experiences and who can offer their sons an example of what it means to be vitally related and involved in a transcendent purpose. Supporting this kind of fatherhood will require a new kind of spirituality rather than the traditional spiritualities that we have relied upon. To our good fortune, the scriptures offer us a rich model for fatherhood and an embodied masculinity in the person of Jesus and his relationship with the one he called "daddy". It is this model of a new spirituality that I will be developing in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER 3
DISTANT FATHERS AND A TRANSCENDENT GOD

Talking with God

There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!", And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters, Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittite, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt (Exodus 3:2-10, NRSV)."

There are few passages in scripture which give a clearer glimpse of that strange mixture of awe, mystery, and intimacy that characterizes the journey with God. "Moses, Moses..." His name is called out like his own father would have spoken
it. "Here I am!", Moses replies, like an obedient child ready to listen to his parent's instructions. Then God invites Moses to take off his shoes as if he were entering the dwelling place of a friend. And then the words which reveal the depths of God's communion with his people: "I have (seen)...I have heard...I KNOW their suffering...and I have come down to deliver them..." Such intimacy only deepens when Moses' confidence is lost in the face of the momentous call to challenge Pharaoh and save his people: "I will be with you....I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak." Israel's suffering and struggle is God's suffering and struggle.

The gracious invitation to communion with God is coupled with a call to reverence and respect. Intimacy and awe, relationship and integrity, knowledge and respect are interwoven in Moses' experience of the God of his ancestors. Where there is close communion, there is maintained a certain distance or boundary. We can sense such a paradox throughout the passages. God relates to Moses in the disguise of a burning bush, and Moses turns his face, fearing too close an encounter. Only after years of being in God's presence will Moses finally speak with God face to face as one person would to another. "Stop...don't come any closer....take your shoes off...you're standing on holy ground", God commands. Moses does not communion with God without a show of great respect. "I have COME DOWN to deliver....", God says, as if to
acknowledge something of Israel’s experience of God’s absence and distance in the long years of oppression. "Give me your name", Moses asked, hoping to find some way to get a handle on and control over this God who is frightening in his knowledge of him, but whom he does not know. "I AM, who I AM" is the obscure reply that is as concealing as it is revealing (Exodus 3:13-14, NRSV). This is a God who can be known, but never controlled by attempts to define and limit his identity. The story tells us that to encounter God is to be fully known and deeply loved while being left with a sense of wonderment and awe.

In these passages we see the on-going struggle of the people of faith to understand their experience of a God who intimately knew them but who remained illusive and mysterious. Israel struggled to come to terms with the immanence of God and God’s transcendence. What the exodus story offers us is a glimpse of how the people of Israel came to understand God’s immanence and transcendence.¹ We can see in the Exodus passage a God of integrity, strength, power, who remains mysterious and yet who sees, hears, knows, and is affected by

¹ Israel’s conception of God is as many feminist have indicated a patriarchal one. The God of Israel in the book of Exodus is often shown in his sovereignty and control over both the political order and creation. But the emphasis on God’s transcendence is one closely tied to God’s immanence. God acts in solidarity with the people of Israel, not in isolation. And though God is often shown as having a will over against that of Israel, there is always maintained a sense of cooperation between the activity of God and the people of God.
their suffering. God is indeed heroic, but God is not an impassioned, unaffected, aloof hero. This struggle to come to terms with these tensions is the task of every generation who seeks to be in meaningful relationship with the living God. How do we talk about our experience of God? What images express who this God is to us in our day? There is a danger that we will define God's immanence in such a way as to make God an object who is a fixed creation of our own experience and who can be controlled and defined by us. Such a God is like the idols the Israelites mocked as having no greatness or mystery, who is only a fragile work made by human hands. And there is the danger, the greater danger for us as men, that we will define God's transcendence in such a way as to remove God from our lives and make God utterly immutable, impersonal, separate, and ultimately irrelevant.

This is not unlike the struggle we as men are involved in as we try to come to terms with our relationship with our fathers. There is the deep longing to know and be known by our fathers, to hear them call our names, to be aware of our struggles, to dare to mentor us along the way that we may find a place among the people of God in the promised land. We struggle to come to terms with the distance, to know how to respond to fathers who say to us, "don't come any closer, take your shoes off, your standing on holy ground." We need fathers who are immanently involved in our lives, and we also need fathers who maintain the strength and the integrity to
inspire us by their greatness. But we sense that something is wrong with the kind of distance and boundaries which have kept us apart.

A Christian spirituality that is capable of speaking to the experiences of men recognizes the connection between our divine images and the father hunger that, because it goes unhealed, has crippled the spiritual lives of many men. Our wounds are finally spiritual wounds and can be healed only by the One who has created us. God the Father can bless us in ways our own fathers were not fully able to bless us. This means finding new images of God as the One who sees, hears, and knows our suffering, who comes to free us from what binds us and who inspires in us a respect for our masculinity. Such new images are of a father who does not turn his back on his children but in his tender love faces and embracing embraces his children, who nurtures us in the ways earthly fathers were not able to care for us (Eilberg-Schwartz 1994, 240). These images of God will support a different kind of masculinity which encourages our connection with self, others, and a meaningful life purpose. But first we need to recognize that many of the ways we have imaged God in the past do not allow for this healing to happen because they are projections of our wounded father images. Rather than being the living God of Israel who binds and heals our wounds, who calls and blesses us as his sons, we are left with images of a God who is autonomous, distant, powerful and controlling. As James
Nelson has aptly stated the problem: "God created us in the divine image and we have returned the favor (Nelson 1988, 45)."

What I wish to offer in this chapter and in the next is a re-imaging of God that is freed from many of problems caused by the ways we as men have traditionally imaged God. I want to point towards some new possibilities for understanding the immanence and the transcendence of God which can nurture us as men and help us to overcome the patriarchal abuses that have been perpetuated by aberrant heroic images of God. I will begin by examining the connection between our father image and our projections onto God. This will involve recognizing how some of the aberrant forms of the hero myth have been maintained by our images of God as autonomous and unrelated, Wholly Other, the Sovereign One with absolute power. The same transcendent hero images of masculinity which sons often learn from their fathers can be seen in the our imaging of God’s transcendence. In the next chapter I want to turn to the life of Jesus, his relationship to God the Father, and his ministry to discover new images of God which can support a healthier masculinity. I will show how Jesus inverts the traditional hero myth in his own passion, in his fiercely compassionate relationships, and his giving of himself in a purposeful vocation. Such an inversion of the hero myth involves a new understanding of God’s immanence and transcendence.
I realize that in focusing on God as father there is a danger of deifying masculinity and that my doing so can be seen as perpetuating the exclusive images of God as male. It is necessary to recognize that God as father has been used for such purposes. Theology has often deifying men and exalting men into the spiritual, "higher" realm above the "lower" realm of embodiment reserved for women. Such theologies have been used to oppress women and also to disconnect men from their experiences, their bodies, and the earth. But if the problems for many men in their development has been caused by a lack of nurturing, attentive fathering, as I have suggested, then to do away with the idea of God as father is to detach ourselves from our experience and the places in ourselves we most need healing. New images of fatherhood in the Godhead which transform the ways we have traditionally thought of fatherhood can offer men a path in healing the father wounds. We need to discover those aspects of God as father which have been underdeveloped in ourselves. This needs to be done with care so that only "particular kinds of fatherly images should be used---not the incorporeal majestic God that helped generate the hierarchical associations of masculinity and spirituality...but the images of a tender loving Father who faces and embraces the child." (Eilberg-Schwartz 1994, 239-240)

Though it is outside the scope of this paper, we also need images of God as mother or feminine which will reconnect us to the feminine. As I argued in the last chapter, men have
been hurt by the ways they have been cut off from the feminine in order to secure their masculinity. Reconnecting with the feminine will be difficult for men, as James Nelson suggests, because "it also raises our unconscious anger at the mother who abandoned us and pushed us out into a man's world where the clues and expectations about our own deepest meanings were hard to find (Nelson 1988, 45)." But doing so also helps us resolve the disconnection and reactivity which have caused men difficulties in their development. Given what we know about the importance of representations of both our mothers and fathers that are developed in early childhood, it is hard to imagine how we could find healing by excluding either mother or father images from our experience of God. We need healing both in relationship to our fathers and our mothers. Images of a God which contain the attributes of mother and father can nurture men to a healthy connection to self and others.

The Birth of the Distant Father God

One of the core beliefs of the Christian faith is that we have been made in the divine image. This affirms God as a reality outside of ourselves who creates and forms us into persons with sexualities that are reflective of God's own being. God is instrumental and active in our creation and affirms the goodness of our sexuality, both male and female. But since the age of reason this one directional interaction in which we are defined by God has been challenged with the
understanding that God is created by projections of our human experiences. God has not simply created us; we have created God. Especially, important has been the focus on the ways early childhood development and the child's relationship to the father or both parents has led to the creation of God representations.

Significant among such understandings has been Freud's early observations about the connection between God and father. Freud believed that a son uses the father's imago to form his God representation during the oedipal developmental phase. "The point is that for Freud the conception of the divinity arose from and is continually implicated in the experience of having a father (Eilberg-Schwartz 1994, 15)."

The complexities of the father/son relationship are projected onto God in such a way that the relationship a man has with his God representations will reflect the relationship he has and continues to have with his father (Rizzuto 1979, 42). But not only the complexities of our father relationship are projected; also the ideals of our father will be projected onto our image of God. God becomes both the symbol for the father we have had and of the kind of man we ought to both admire and emulate. For Freud, God served a regressive function in the lives of men. Freud saw religion as "an illusion, an infantile wish for parental protection in the face of life's difficulties (Rizzuto 1979, 42)." As such, he felt a more mature person, like himself, had no reason to
maintain such an illusion.

Much has been written by other more recent psychotherapists which offers a more positive assessment of religion in fostering emotional health. More recent research has expanded Freud's exclusive focus on the role of the father. Ana-Marie Rizzuto in her research with 20 clients discovered that our God representations are derived from a variety of sources (including mother) and continue to develop throughout the life cycle. While our images of God bear a strong resemblance to our relations to our parents in the pre-oedipal years, many other factors including our culture will effect our image of God. Rizzuto has shown the powerfully role these representations serve in helping persons maintain a sense of their identity and well being. She also shows how these representations can change over a life time in ways that support healthy development by providing for needed self objects not receive from our parents (Rizzuto 1979, 52-53). Such research supports the possibility for various images of God and for transformations of those images through out one's life.

But there continues to be general agreement that our experience with our fathers is related to how we are likely to image and related to God. Given the powerful place of fathers in men's lives, it is especially essential to focus on how this relationship effects our God representations. Conflicts in the father/son relationship are often reflected in the way
we image our relationship with God. This is a fact well established in psychotherapist’s work with their patient’s religious beliefs (Rizzuto, 1979). It is not surprising that men’s experiences of their fathers as separate, distant, unfeeling, authoritarian, should be reflected in the ways God has come to be imagined in many masculine theologies.

Feminist, for example, have especially recognized the interplay between masculinity and images of God. It is not simply that the image of father that has been projected onto God but that masculinity itself has been projected heavenward. Masculinity is deified and femininity is relegated to the lower physical realm as something less than spiritual and the male ideal. A hierarchy is established with men being in the superior position as symbolized by the enthronement of a masculine deity. Men are then associated with the spiritual, rational, and conscious, while women are lowered to the level of the physical, irrational, and unconscious. The traditional need of men to separate themselves from the feminine in order to secure their sense of masculinity is supported by the deification of masculinity and relegation of the feminine to an inferior status. Such theologies dichotomize and divides men and women and allow men to occupy a superior and securer position (Keller 1986, 38).

Masculine theologies, for example, intent on maintaining men’s superior place perpetuate highly transcendent understandings of God which inevitably denigrate any
meaningful sense of God's immanence and connection with the body and the earth. There is a dualism in masculine theologies, a division between male/female, spirit/body, heaven/earth, and thought/feelings. Experience, feelings, human needs, relationships, the respect of life are negated by a doctrine of a transcendent God which reflects the masculine need to be detached and in control. God has become like the aberrant hero so important to masculine identity. The transcendent qualities of courage, endurance steadfastness, discipline, aggression, separation, and autonomy are the dominant ways we come to imagine God. What is missing are the images of God as embodied, God's passion, vulnerability, gentleness, intimacy, and communion.

One of the more helpful feminist theological writers, Catherine Keller, seeks to rethink the doctrine of God's immanence and transcendence in less dualistic and hierarchical ways. She seeks to establish a more inter-relational spirituality by confronting the ways masculine ideals of separation have been deified while avoiding the problem of enmeshment that are often associated with women. She suggest that the imagining of God as masculine means that the male norm of separation has become deified. The heroic separate self, the dominant masculinity, has been projected upon God. God has been defined by a separative transcendence in which God is "self-sufficient, omnipotence, impassibility and immutability (Keller 1986, 38)." Transcendence has been
defined as separation. In criticizing theologian Reinhold Niebuhr she writes of her concern with many masculine theologies: ". . . there is to be no interrelation of beings, no blurring of the boundaries between God and the world, self and God, self and Other (Keller 1986, 43)." She suggest God's transcendence is not coupled with God's immanence in any meaningful way.

This separateness has been maintained by the belief in God's immutability. Keller says that "One may read much of theological history as a conscious attempt to compress the warming intuition that God is love into the cold, hard diamond of divine immutability (Keller 1986, 37)." God is love, but it is a love that is disembodied, one without passion. This is agape love exalted over and with out connection to the power of eros. She quotes Anselm as affirming "Thou art compassionate in terms of our experience, and not compassionate in terms of thy being (Keller 1986, 37)." Only occasionally does God pay a visit to God's children who are then viewed as having little power and in need of being rescued by a heroic God. God is very much like the aberrant heroic ego many men experience and learn from their fathers: separate, unaffected, and all powerful.

As I read Keller, I am struck by how she speaks to the unsettled, uneasy feelings with the contradictory ways God was described to me as a young child. The predominant message received in Sunday school and taught to me by my mother was
God's constant love and concern for my welfare as reflected in the ways God has provided for us. That was always coupled with more darker images I was given of God from the scriptures. I remember my reactions to the reading of the story of Noah. It was a delightful story for me, and yet at a deeper level I remember how the story frightened me. I could picture the waters rising and the door of the ark being closed shut while hearing the people pleading to be let on the boat. And I could see the tiny boat being tossed about the sea, the lighting crashing in the sky. And those terrible, frightening words of God to Noah, "...every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground (Genesis 7:4, NRSV)." If God were so loving why did God seem so distant, so easily displeased, and so harsh? What kind of love is this? It never really made much sense to me, even as a young child. It is interesting for me to note the messages I got about from my dad weren't so different. Dad was loving; he provided for us and was concerned for my welfare. And yet, the distance, his preoccupation with work, and the irritable moods. The masculine imago of my father was not unlike the one I had of God.

I suspect that many men will find such a connection between their image of God and their father's representations. The heroic masculinity is confirmed and supported by our theologies. God is both a projection of our images and models back to us the images of masculinity for us to emulate.
"Religion is both a 'model of and model for' human beings (Eilberg-Schwartz 1994, 17)." Our faith images are our ego ideals as Freud suggests. These images support disconnection from self, from relationship and meaningful vocation.

Few theologians have show as clearly this connection between our cultural images of masculinity and our images of God than James Nelson. Like Keller, Nelson is concerned with how our notions of God's transcendence both reflect and model unhealthy images of masculinity. But unlike Keller, Nelson's primary focus is on the effect of this relationship on men and their relationships. Masculine doctrines of God which emphasis transcendence over immanence are analogous and support the dualism in men which emphasizes spirit over body, rationality over feelings. A disembodied God and a divine Jesus support a heroic image of masculinity.

Traditional masculine spirituality has not been connected to male sexuality, but has encouraged a dualism between spirit and body, mind and matter. God's transcendence over immanence reflects the masculine transcendence of spirit over body. In early Christian theology to the present,

Spirit came to be understood as the eternal and good part of the self, while the body was mortal, temporal, subject to decay and death. Furthermore, since sexuality seemed to be such a body phenomenon, it was most often viewed with deep suspicion as the chief source and vehicle of sin (Nelson 1988, 22).

Such a dualism has encouraged men to disregard the fullness of their experience, their feelings, and their needs. We have
emphasized only the aspects of our experience which support a transcendence of our body/feeling into the so-called higher spiritual, rational realm. Nelson points to our preoccupation as men with the qualities of the self symbolized by the erect phallus, aggression, straightforwardness, penetration, size, and power. What is ignore and undervalued is the other part of male experience, the soft non-erect penis and the qualities it symbolizes like vulnerability, softness, smallness. Nelson states:

"Phallus bears intimations of life and vigor, while penis bears intimations of mortality. Fearing mortality, men tend to reject the qualities of the penis and project them upon women who are then seen to be small, soft, and vulnerable, qualities inferior to the phallic standard (Nelson 1988, 95)."

Such a one-sided experience of ourselves supports an unauthentic self, disconnected from the fullness of our humanity. A more authentic masculinity would recognize that the phallus and the penis are in fact one, that both reflect our humanity. We need the phallus strength to be vitally engaged and to enable us to be "fertile men" that we may share with women in the creation of life. Without this experience "there is gentleness without strength, peacefulness without vitality, tranquility without vibrancy (Nelson 1988, 93)."

But without acknowledging the non-erect penis aspect of our experience we lose our ability to be vulnerable and receptive and engaged in mutual relationship. We become cold, hard, and maintain the separateness which is so familiar to most men's
experience.

Traditional Christology have supported this sexual dualism by rejecting or down playing the sexuality and humanity of Jesus. Jesus's divinity has dominated Jesus' humanity to the point that his humanity has become largely an illusion:

Countless Christians believed that Jesus Christ was actually God disguised as a human being. It was the Superman / Clark Kent image. Jesus was the celestial visitor from outer space who lived for a time on earth disguised as one of us, did feats of superhuman power, and then returned to his glorious home in the skies (Nelson 1988, 109).

In this kind of Christology, God and Jesus both ultimately remain largely absent, autonomous, separate, and "above" human experience and mutual relationship. It is not God's nature to be intimately involved in an on-going relationship to human experience. It is a one time mission of heroic proportions in which God comes down with unilateral power to rescue a helpless humanity (Nelson 1988, 109). Both God and Jesus remain largely transcendent and unattached to humanity in any ultimate sense. There is no meaningful relationship between God's transcendence and immanence. Through such theologies both God and Jesus have come to model and encourage in men an aberrant heroic masculinity, one which is disconnected from the fullness of a man's sexuality and meaningful relationships.
I agree with Nelson's observations, but I would add to them by suggesting that the spiritual dualism between God's transcendence and immanence has also been maintained in other forms. Early Protestant liberalism sought to overcome problems encountered by a highly transcendent God by developing a Christology of a very human Jesus who comes to humanity as an example of God's love. Such a Jesus was gentle and loving, and sacrificial. He was the exemplary good man who was victimized by an evil social order. But there is no real resurrection and no sense of the mystery of God in Jesus. Such a view of Jesus is appealing in that it attempts to "bring Jesus down to earth" with the qualities which we as men have largely ignored, but we are left with a version of a Jesus who is hard to respect and who fails to inspire men. There is immanence but no transcendence in such a Christology. What such theologies have done is offer us an immanent Jesus, while maintaining a view of God the Father which remains highly transcendent. "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (an early liberal protestant hymn), but God the Father remains distant and harsh. God and humanity remain divided.

Neither a divine, super-hero Jesus or a non-transcendent Jesus models for us a masculinity that is redemptive of the "deep masculine", or the "heroic energy". The former leaves us alienated from ourselves and from the connection we want. The latter cuts us off from our vitality. In both cases we are left with the absent, separate, immutable Father God who
has little relevance for our lives and no power to heal the father wound. Such a Father God is even alienated from his son Jesus, who in many traditional theologies must die to satisfy the wrath of his father for the disobedience of his children. In such theologies, we see the same alienation between Jesus and his heavenly Father that we have known with our earthly fathers. We seek a fuller experience of God than either of these options. We want to move away from the self-alienation, and we have experienced enough separation. We want vocations that move us beyond the limits of our individual interest, but we are tired of losing our vitality to causes which serve neither ourselves or humanity. We need to encounter the God whom Moses came to know, the One who knew the depths of his heart and yet by an awesome presence, power, and wisdom could inspire a fearful man like Moses to lead his people to the promise land. We encounter such a God in the compassion of Jesus.
CHAPTER 4
INVERSION OF THE HERO GOD

A Hero's Birth

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her first born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn (Luke 2:1-7, NRSV).

The birth of Jesus is comparable with the birth stories of other world mythological heroes. Such heroes are born against the backdrop of great messianic hopes by people who are in a time of despair, spiritual poverty, and social unrest (Slusser 1986, 50). It is thought that only a man who has the qualities of a god is capable of rescuing the people from their great need. Israel hoped for a messiah like David who would have the power to lead the people in victory against the oppression of the Romans and fulfill the prophetic longing to establish Jerusalem as the center of the known world.
But Luke paints a picture of a hero few would have recognized as the long awaited savoir. Even though he comes from God, he comes wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a grungy stable manger in a tiny town outside the gates of Jerusalem, the center of wealth and power. God's son comes vulnerable as every infant is vulnerable, subject to the same conditions in which we are subject, fully identified with every human being's need for love and care. His birth goes unnoticed by the world, no parades or festivals honor his coming. He doesn't even have a place to lay his head, but is subjected with his family to the whims of a powerful king who can force common people on a long journey to pay taxes (Craddock 1984, 50).

There is mystery and awe in this story, but it is witnessed only by despised and rejected shepherds to whom the angels announce the glorious birth and direct them to a stable and a babe in a manger. Even here we see a reversal of the hero myth. In Luke's gospel it is no longer earth looking to the heavens for a heroic rescue, but it is heaven through the angels looking and pointing back to earth. The extra-ordinary is pointing to the ordinary: "Go and see for yourselves, God is among you."

The hero is born, but from the beginning he is not the hero expected. He will continue to disappoint those who want a hero with the transcendent qualities of God: unlimited power, autonomy, control, domination, and immutability. Their
disappointment will lead to his death. For a hero who comes in vulnerability and finitude, the cross is already in the stable. We have been given a story of a hero who inverts the masculine ideal of the immutable, autonomous, omnipotent, divine hero. This is not the hero whose humanity is thought to be only a disguise for his true divine nature. This hero comes closer to possessing the qualities of masculinity that Sam Keen describes: manly grief, virile fear, and fierce gentleness. Transcendence is not separated from immanence or immanence from transcendence. The qualities such as courage, power, fortitude are not projected heavenward. Nor are the qualities of gentleness, vulnerability, responsiveness despised and restricted to femininity. There is now something human about being divine and something divine about being human. In Jesus, God and humanity meet one another. We are given in the life and ministry of Jesus a new vision of what God is like and what we as human beings can become.

The Immanence and Transcendence of God the Father

A closer reading of the gospel stories such as the birth of Jesus challenges many of the ways we have traditionally thought about God. The problem of many of our concepts of God has been our use of abstract terms to speak about God like omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal. We have lost the sense that God is fully present and alive in the world, that we are vitally linked to God in whom we move as have our being. We
have lost a sense of our connection in an on-going relationship to a nurturing God. We have had enough of the Father God who occasionally drops in on his creation for a visit, and then just to straighten things out. Such an image of God only reflects the distance and the separation of father's from our lives. And they serve only to reinforce the detached and autonomous masculinity we learned from our fathers.

If we are to have a masculinity that is more authentic and related, we need to understand God's transcendence in ways that are more grounded and embodied. God can only be known through incarnation. God is sacramentally embodied, revealed through the ordinary. Jesus' use of the ordinary and the familiar to speak of the mystery of God and God's activity reveals God's connection with the earth. He talked of earthly things like water, bread, fish, the wind, the temple, his body in order to reveal the mystery of God. Jesus saw God speaking to him throughout the day in ordinary experiences, so that God his "daddy" was always actively engaged with him. "God becomes part of the everyday, part of the pain and the pleasure of bodily existence (McFague 1993, 133)." We discover the Father who is the source of our lives, whose life giving and nurturing spirit is as vital and close as the air we breathe. All the encounters of our lives and our daily experience become an opportunities to discover the presence of an empowering and nurturing Father. We learn the importance
of keeping our eyes on what we can see and touch so that we may discover God with us. The extra-ordinary is discovered in the ordinary.

When we come to see God as immanently involved with the creation the way we think about God's transcendence is changed. Transcendence no longer refers to God's separation from the creation. We can now think of transcendence in more human terms, in the realm of possibility. Transcendence comes to mean the God who surprises us because the divine is "surpassing, excelling, extraordinary, (McFague 1993, 154)" and mysterious. God creates in us admiration and a sense of awe, not because God is all powerful and separate but because we are surprised by the magnificence of God's presence and the intimacy of God's knowledge of us. We can see this in the story of Moses describe earlier. What inspired Moses at the burning bush was not that God was separate and all powerful, but that God knew him and his people intimately.

We find that our intimate knowledge and relationship to God leads us to deeper mystery and a greater reverence. To say that God is transcendent is to suggest that the deeper we go in our experience and knowledge of God (i.e. God's immanent self) the greater our experience of God's mystery. Our intimate experience of God does not exhaust the divine self. Paul wrote about this kind of immanent-transcendence in a letter to the Ephesians:
May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love, and may you be able to feel and understand as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it (Ephesians 3:17 paraphrase, The Living Bible).

God's immanence means we can be intimately related to the divine; God's transcendence means we are left with a sense of awe and greater mystery in such relating. We are offered a relationship with a God with whom we can both know and respect. Intimacy and awe are connected. Such a God inspires us to emulate the qualities we admire. These qualities are no longer of the super-human hero, but the qualities of the hero who is authentic and radically relational. Masculinity is no longer defined by separation and immutability, but by an intimacy that is present, respectful, and compassionate, one which inspires respect and reverence. Most of us as men have met or had the fortune to have known such men who radiate this kind of presence that is reflective of the divine nature. We have a sense in their presence that we are fully known and respected for who we are. Such a person communicates a security in their masculinity which does not need to dominate or remain detached.

Christianity affirms that we come to know God best through the incarnation of Christ in the person of Jesus. Jesus reveals to us the nature of God as Father whose transcendence and immanence is related in the surprising paradox that I have been describing. What I wish to continue
to develop in this chapter is a new way of viewing the life and ministry of Jesus so that we may be offered a alternate way of envisioning the Fatherhood of God. My thesis is that in discovering a passionate, relationally connected Jesus involved in a transforming, compassionate life purpose we will be able to re-image God the Father in ways which can resource the spiritual lives of men. By being free from the images of God which have reinforces and supported our own alienation we may be opened to find ourselves in the presence of a God capable of healing the father wound within us.

**Inversion of the Immutable Hero**

This discovery of God's transcendence in our midst, in the ordinary of our experience and our relationships is difficult for us to imagine. We have been looking for so long to the heavens for one who is like the aberrant hero to satisfy our father hunger that we can easily overlook the ordinary ways God the Father comes to speak to us. This was the experience of the first disciples as well. The disciple also look beyond the earth to find God, missing the reality of God's embodied presence in Jesus. This is seen in Philip's request to Jesus. Philip inadvertently expresses the hunger of all men's search for a nurturing Father God when he declares: "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." And Jesus replies, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:8-9, NRSV)." The Father comes to us in
embodiment and is known in the person of Jesus and the relationships of the early Christian community. It was in Jesus' daily activity, friendship, and in his tragic death that Philip was told that he would come to know God the Father.

We can see Jesus' revelation of the divine nature in the way Jesus lived his life. It is easy for us to be so concentrated on Jesus as a disembodied spiritual man on a sacrificial journey to the cross (the heroic quest) that we may overlook how much Jesus embraced life. His death would not have been so passionate if he had not first lived a passionate life. We can see Jesus' passion for life throughout the scriptures. He was described by his critics as a "glutton" because he celebrated life with the community of his followers. He could see the message of faith in the daily experience and joy of a woman sweeping the floor and discovering a coin. He understood the feelings, longings, and conflicts of relationships and family life when he told of the prodigal son making his way home to a heart broken, long-suffering father. We can not miss the passion of Jesus (and the passion of God the Father) for life when Jesus says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing (Matthew 23:37, NRSV)!" He was not afraid to embrace the earth or to even describe God
in the most earthly terms. He knew that the earth, the flesh, and God were connected in some mysterious way. Jesus was attuned to the rhythm and the flow of life. He took the pulse of the world because he valued the life he found in it. In the life of Jesus we are given an image of God which is counter to the "hard diamond of divine immutability" described by Keller (Keller 1986, 37).

Early Christianity understood this need to know God's heart-felt embrace of our human condition. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians we are given a early Christian hymn which expresses the first formulations of a Christology in the early church which reflects a life embracing God. Paul writes:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death---even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11, NRSV).

This hymn expresses the paradox of the Christian faith which stands against the unauthentic, detached forms of the hero myth. Equality with God is not to be grasp, rather the heroic nature of Jesus' person is to be found in his willingness to accept the status of slave and to experience the ultimate limits of the human condition through death upon a cross.
There is no hint in this hymn that Jesus was merely God masked as human. The power that he possesses is in his willingness to be fully human and in radical relationship to the world. In his solidarity with the human condition in his tragic death he reveals the divine nature which is "surpassing, excelling, extraordinary, (McFague 1993, 154)." In the most radical way his divinity is seen in his humanity and his humanity is seen in his divinity. Jesus has inverted the way we image the hero by an openness to the fullness of his humanity.

The writer Frederick Buechner grasp the full meaning of the incarnation when he says:

All religion and philosophies which deny the reality or the significance of the material, the fleshly, the earth-bound, are themselves denied. Moses at the burning bush was told to take off his shoes because the ground on which he stood was holy ground (Exodus 3:5), and the incarnation means that all ground is holy ground because God not only made it but walked on it, ate and slept and worked and died on it. If we are saved anywhere, we are saved here. And what is saved is not some diaphanous distillation of our bodies and our earth but our bodies and the earth themselves (Buechner 1973, 43)

What Jesus reveal to us as men is a masculine spirituality that encourages us as men to take our lives and the lives of those around us more seriously. This requires listening to and valuing the experiences of our lives which we might otherwise overlook. I believe that this is one of the points in which feminist can be of most help to us as men. Feminist have pointed to the importance of allowing our bodies, the uniqueness of our sexuality, the particular
experiences of our lives to be our greatest teachers. When we look to ourselves we will discover our true nature which is a great deal more complex and mysterious than the aberrant images of masculinity would imply. We should not dare to be limited and defined by images of masculinity which split us off from the vulnerable, gentle, nurturing side of ourselves.

I believe we will discover a fuller understanding of our nature through the kind of self Rita Nakashima Brock describes in a summary of Alice Miller's concepts of the self:

...the self is a set of capacities born into each individual uniquely at birth. These capacities involve the ability to feel one's own physical, emotional, and sensory needs, to make those needs known, and to receive through the body, senses and feelings, the world outside the self (Brock 1993, 9).

This is the true self which Miller describes as having been hidden by the development of a false self in early childhood because the needs and longings that are innate in us were not responded to by empathetically attuned parents. This "false self" is not unlike the aberrant hero whose development I described in an earlier chapter. Listening to our experiences, as feminist have suggested, means rediscovering the true self that has been hidden from us by our attempts to live into the aberrant forms of the hero. The true self is one which is aware of its needs and willing to be vulnerable and relational enough to let them be known. Such a true self is passionate (i.e. the fullest range of expressed needs and emotions) and desires intimate connection.
Only such a reclaiming of the true self can bring the healing we need. In my own journey this became apparent through a dream which occurred soon after I had gone through a painful divorce. I was in a bus which was making its way slowly down a neighborhood street. As we approached a curve in the road I saw a little boy. His eyes were intensely fixed on me filled with hurt and anger, as if to say, "can't you see how injured I am". He booted a ball at me as the bus slowly drove on. I woke up sad and feeling guilt for having driven on. I knew then that there were parts of me which were crying for attention, calling me to get off the bus of masculine success, and masculine immutability and spend time with my grief. It was one of those events which signaled my need for inner healing.

If we can dare to see in Jesus the image of God as a Father who is affected and radically involved in our lives and the creation, then may be more of us as men will listen to the fullness of our experiences. May be then we will dare to fully embrace the gift of our humanity which includes not only aggression, an intentional will, and hardness, but also the signs of our embodiment and mortality: vulnerability, manly grief, and virile fear. Our embracing of our "true self" will mean having a greater passion for the depth and breath of our humanity. Maybe then we will dare to become aware of our father wound and the many other ways our true masculinity has been damaged so that we can connect with the God who hear,
sees, and knows our pain and the beauty of our needs.

Inversion of the Autonomy of the Hero

True to the faith of the hero myth, Jesus has been traditionally described as the powerful, autonomous man, who was willing to sacrifice his own needs and desires, to endure alone any pain for the sake of humanity. We have been looking at one aspect of this myth, the disembodied, desexualized, detached person of Jesus who the traditional myth describes as transcending the usual limits of human existence. We now turn to another aspect of the traditional hero myth: the autonomy of the hero who alone acts to redeem creation. This aspect of the hero myth has served to isolate men, to reinforce the illusion that a real man doesn't need vital and enduring connections to others. As I have sought to show it is encouraged in our development by the absence of our fathers and the radical disconnection and lack of a renegotiated relationship with our mother (and the feminine). What we have not noticed is just how radically relational and interdependent Jesus was in his life and ministry.

I suspect that our individualistic culture has so twisted our perceptions of the gospel that we have not recognized this aspect of the ministry of Jesus. Far from the self-made man, Jesus reveals himself as formed and shaped by his familial relationships, his relationship with God whom he called father, and the company of his followers. The life of Jesus
can just as easily be viewed through the drama of his relationships as it can be seen as an epic journey of the lone hero. In fact our continuation of focusing on the lone heroic aspects of Jesus' ministry betrays some of the dominate themes of the gospel: the power of community to empower persons and the call to servanthood. A perspective that recognizes our natural individualistic bias will recognize the ways Jesus was both empowered by community and the creator of community by his acts of "com-passion" (with passion).

Foremost in this debate to reclaim the communal aspects of Jesus' ministry is feminist writer Rita Nakashima Brock. She suggest that the redemptive power of Christ resides not in Jesus alone but in the power of eros in the community of his followers:

> Jesus is used by the Gospel writers, who shape oral and written traditions for their own distinctive theological purposes, to focus faith, but he is not the locus of redemptive event, even during his life. Christ—the revelatory and redemptive witness of God/dess's work in history—is Christa/Community (Brock 1993, 69).

Such a merger of Christology and ecclesiology is Brock's attempt to shift the focus of our attention away from our preoccupation with the heroic sacrifice of a single individual (especially, a man) to achieve salvation on our behalf (a unilateral view of salvation), to a focus on intimacy and a radical restructuring of relationships in a community which dared to challenge and transform the dominant power structures of first century Israel. She recognizes the special role of
the historical person of Jesus, but she insist that his person and his ministry result from the forces of community out of which he emerged as the leader, a co-creator of the power of eros to transform relationships (Brock 1993, 52-53).

Brock's perspective helps us to overcome some of our individualistic biases by recognizing the relational nature of the gospels. Such a shift in perspective requires us to reexamine the way we conceive of the meaning of Christian love. The dominate christian concept of agape as the superior form of love is no longer adequate. Agape has traditionally been defined as the way God loves. It is an objective, dispassionate love willing to sacrifice the self in a heroic effort to save humanity. Such a concept of love is attractive in that it affirms the necessity of purging the self of egocentric preoccupation and in its recognition of the cost of love, but it also supports the myth of an disembodied, dispassionate God who acts autonomously and heroically to save humanity. Brock argues that the idea of heroic sacrifice is at the center of this limited concept of love and that such an ideal of love fails to recognize the power of eros, the power of the heart's passion to be draw to connection to others in mutual relationship. Erotic power is an aspect of divine love which recognizes our natural affinity to be related and connected to one another:

Erotic power is the power of our primal interrelatedness. Erotic power, as it creates and connects hearts, involves the whole person in relationships of self-awareness, vulnerability,
openness, and caring (Brock 1993, 26)

Power is not understood here as the power to get one's way, to be the lone hero who reaches the superior position from which to dominate and control. Rather erotic power is the "ability to get along with others and the ability to get things done (Brock 1993, 27)." This kind of power is related to our "true self", the self of our childhood that was vulnerable and desired connection (Brock 1993, 39). It draws us out of ourselves to connect our whole self in relationship with others. Because such a relational power lets itself be affected, it is moved to act of behalf of both the self and others. It causes us to be so connected that we are willing to struggle for justice. This love is less reminiscent of the detached and autonomous images of God that we as men have imaged, and more like of the God who appeared to Moses: "I have seen...I have heard...I know their suffering." We can see the symbol of such love in the vulnerable Christ child lying in a manager, fully dependent upon his parents for nurture and protection. There is transcendent power in this love, but it is the transcendent power that comes in the experience of awe in the sight of a baby.

It is helpful to "put on" Brock's perspective like a set of new reading glasses and to consider the life of Jesus from a more relational context. The picture that emerges is of a man whose life was highly impacted by the joys and sorrows, the moments of intimate encounters and withdrawals of a
multitude of relationships. Far from being the autonomous hero, Jesus's power is both resourced by and impacts upon the kind of relationships of his life. We can see these dynamics in Jesus' relationship with women and with his disciples.

I indicated in an earlier chapter that our relationship with woman has been radically effected by our need to define ourselves by separating from the feminine. I suggested that the experience of being encouraged to secure our masculinity by a radical disconnection from mothers has caused men to struggle with being in the ebb and flow of on-going intimate relationships with women. This suspicion of the feminine in traditional Christianity has often lead us to image the heroic Jesus as supporting the domination of women. But we see in the gospels a Jesus who was nurtured by the women of the gospels and who in relationship to women acted to empower them.

The gospel reveals how Jesus was dependent upon a broad community of relationships which included the support of women. Jesus continually is shown to return to the community of Capernaum, for support and nourishment. He enters the homes of families, like Mary and Martha for physical nourishment and rest. He began his ministry by calling together a community of disciples which quickly grew to include in the larger community a number of women, many of whom were disenfranchised by the larger culture. Brock indicates that out of such relationships with women Jesus's
ministry developed a vision of justice and concern for women. The kind of nurture and connection which Jesus had lead him to be "woman identified", having the "capacity to feel and envision justice for women on the basis of concrete relationships with real women.... (Brock 1993, 67)."

There are many of stories in the gospels which reveal Jesus both as the recipient of nurture and support from women and the powerful healer who stands against the traditions of his culture which supported misogyny. The story of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee stands out as one incident in which we see the power of eros in Jesus and his relationship with women (Luke 7:36-50, NRSV). Jesus is invited to eat at Simon's house. While he is there a woman described as an ostracized sinner enters Simon's home where the men are gathered and begins to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears and her hair. She carefully anoints and kisses his feet in great gratitude for the love that Jesus has shown her in spite of her position in Israeli society as an outcast. Simon's heart is embittered at the sight of Jesus, a rabbi and a man, receiving such love and affection from a woman and a sinner. Jesus tells a parable:

"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more? (Luke 7:41-42, NRSV)"

When Simon answers correctly, "the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." Jesus calls attention to the negligence of
Simon's concern and care for Jesus as his guest, while praising the great love shown by the woman. Then he says to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven....Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

We might normally look at this story paying particular attention to Jesus as the principle actor, the heroic savior who confronts a heartless man and saves a wretched prostitute. But if we so limited our perspective on this story we would miss the elements of erotic love (in the broadest sense) and the degree of mutuality in Jesus's relationship to this woman.

Simon responds out of a moral system which is preoccupied with the necessity of a hierarchy of purity, one in which women inevitably are relegated to the fringe. He represents a kind of masculinity that needs to establish a system of morality that is based on exclusion and separation. Such a system is uncomfortable with being in relationship with women and others on the fringe who do not meet the standards of acceptability. Women were subordinated to the role of providing a reproductive function which established a man's name for the next generation. This woman had suffered further exclusion by her apparent lack of conformity to such a system.

Jesus counters the masculinity of dualism, separation, and domination that Simon represents. He reveals a masculinity that is willing to be in on-going relationship with a woman, one in which he is not afraid to both give and receive. One can see in between the lines of this story the
emotional bond and mutual relationship that exist between Jesus and this woman. It is apparent that in a previous encounter this woman has been empowered by her relationship with Jesus. She has experienced a different kind of relationship in the masculinity of Jesus which is willing to be in relationship to her as a woman, even in her destitution. We can know of the degree of love she has experienced from Jesus in the tender, passionate way she shows her gratitude. What is most interesting in this story, and what makes many people who do not want to acknowledge the sexuality of Jesus uncomfortable, is the way in which Jesus is vulnerable and receptive of this woman's affection and attention. Jesus takes delight in the healing that has happen for this woman and the signs of her gratitude. Jesus exemplifies not only a heroic agape but the power of eros to create intimacy that is freeing and empowering.

But the principle actor in this story is the woman. It is not a story of unilateral salvation by a heroic Jesus who rescues this woman. They are co-creators of her healing and restoration to community. It is her faith that dared to take the risk of entering the house of Simon uninvited as an outcast sinner and to be at the table where only the men should have been. It is her vulnerability at receiving Jesus's love that made her healing possible. As Jesus says, "your faith has saved you."
We don't know how Jesus came to relate to the feminine in such a mutual and empowering way, exactly what Jesus's early development was like. We do have brief stories of Jesus' relationship with his mother which reveal him to have known both his mother's nurture and the usual family tensions we all experience. When his mother, fearful of a socially embarrassing situation, tells Jesus to use his power to make more wine and save the wedding party, Jesus can sound like a lot of sons: "Woman, what concern is this to you and to me? My hour has not yet come (John 2:4, NRSV)." Perhaps we can see a hint of Jesus' differentiation from his mother in a conflict such as this. On another occasion we see Jesus drawing a clear boundary from his mother and family when she came to speak to him while he was teaching. When told that his mother and brothers were waiting for him outside, Jesus responded "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it (Luke 8:21, NRSV)." But there is no indication that Jesus ever severed his relationship with his mother or that she ever ceased to be an important part of his life. The gospel of John shows the full breath of Jesus' love for his mother. She stood and endured with him the agony of his death at the cross. And even on the cross Jesus' concern is expressed for his mother. Jesus points to John the disciple and says to his mother: "Woman, here is your son." And then to John, "Here is your mother (John 19:26-27, NRSV)." Certainly, Jesus' mother would have played a vital role in
empowering her son to be in vital relationship with the feminine. Jesus' sense of his masculinity was secure enough to relate to the feminine and to be "woman identified". We can imagine how such a secure sense of himself could only have come from an empathetic and nurturing relationship with his mother.

The myth of the autonomous hero is confronted by such images of Jesus in this kind of radical and mutual relationship with the feminine. It is also confronted in the kind of relationship we see Jesus having with other men. Jesus inverts the masculine idea of the hero myth which typically displays the ideal man as competitive and victorious over other men, even his friends. He inverts the myth of the hero's isolation calling his disciples to relationships with one another that de-emphasized competition and control and which value truthful, enduring friendships.

The Gospel of Mark is especially helpful in enabling us to see the dynamics of Jesus' relationship with his disciples since it is less concerned with the teachings of Jesus and more concerned with what happened within the community of the disciples. In Mark's gospel the disciples are shown to be so obsessed with position and power that they are rendered incapable of understanding the true meaning of Jesus as the Messiah. The disciples' view of Messiah comes close to the ways I have described the aberrant form of the hero who is defined by self-absorbed aggression, oppressive competition,
autonomy, and a lack of genuine intimacy. They are so absorbed in the myth of the hero and their participation in his expected victory that they are not open to the alternative way of the hero (Messiah), one which acts out of compassion for the weak and creating connection and empowering relationship in an alternative community. We hear in these disputes between Jesus and his disciples an echo of our own struggles as men to come to terms with the true meaning of masculinity. Jesus inverts the hero myth that both we and the disciples have held to so firmly. He offers us liberating insights about the possibilities for masculinity by courageously and steadfastly making himself vulnerable and passionately committed to the oppressed. His transcendent power is seen in the immanence of his relational commitments.

Sam Keen describes the kind of masculinity Jesus offers when he comments on the message of Jesus' life for men:

A man finds fulfillment (spiritual and sexual) only when he turns aside from willfulness and surrenders to something beyond self. Virility involves life in communion. When we try to discover the principle of manhood within the isolated self, we will end up not fulfilling the self but destroying it. Manhood can be defined only in relational terms (Keen 1991, 103).

We can see in Mark's Gospel how Jesus inverts the hero myth in the events which followed his second foretelling of his impending persecution and death (Mark 9:30-37, NRSV). For a second time Jesus takes his disciples aside to prepare them for the events of his persecution and death which await him
when they arrive in Jerusalem. So steadfast are they in their expectations of his heroic mission that they are left only confused by such suggestions. Immediately after his sharing with his friends the painful fate that awaits him, his disciples become embroiled in an argument with each wanting to prove himself as the greatest of Jesus' disciples. One sees in these disputes the familiar competitive struggle which dominates many of our interaction as men. As a result, the disciples are unable to be the friend Jesus needed, and neither are they able to bond together in a commonality that will help them remain connected to one another after Jesus is arrested. When Peter later will make a vain attempt to honor his friendship with Jesus by following Jesus to the high priest house, he will end up denying him saying, "I don't know this man you are talking about (Mark 14:71, NRSV)." In such words, Peter will actually be speaking the truth. Neither he or the other disciple knew Jesus and the meaning of his vocation. Such a hero as Jesus is unfamiliar and difficult to accept.

When Jesus confronted the disciples about their conversation, they remain shamefully silent. For a second time he proceeds to explain a new understanding of the nature of discipleship by offering a paradox: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Jesus inverts the values of the hero. The first is not the first but the last. And the last, the one who consciously considers and
values the needs and rights of others is actually first. Such considerations for others radically undermines the autonomy of the hero. It shifts one from the limit perspective of the individual self to take into consideration of the community. This is the power of eros in community, the capacity to care for and enjoy the other, to have a desire that is freed from the egocentricity of the self. What is sacrificed here is not the "true self". The "true self" as I have shown is one which is drawn to relationship, which is both willing to make one's own needs known and to care about the needs of another. It is the "false self", the mask of the aberrant expressions of the hero which must always be fighting to prove and establish itself which Jesus calls us to sacrifice.

Jesus immediately follows his saying to his disciples by taking into his arms a little child with the words: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me (Mark 9:37, NRSV)." From our perspective as men we can hear in these words of Jesus a call to his disciples and to us as men to reclaim the more vulnerable, open, and expressive parts of ourselves which make the creation of relationships and community possible. This does not mean sacrificing the other aspects of ourselves which have been overvalued. Aspects of the self like aggression, firmness, determination, singularity of purpose, strait-forwardness remain essential to being masculine. We will see this in Jesus faithfulness to his
vocation. Only now these aspects serve the purpose of creating relationship and community rather than dividing us from one another. They are enhanced by a more receptive and vulnerable disposition towards the world.

**Inversion of the Hero's Vocation**

Sam Keen has noted the importance of work for a man's self-worth and identity. Men do not have the option of creating and nurturing life in their bodies as do women; it is through their hands, their work that men are able to express themselves. This makes men particularly vulnerable to over-identifying themselves with what they do and losing connection to who they are. Many men are easily driven by the promises of success and performance as a way of establishing an inner sense of well being. In such a desperate quest, work can be void of any connection to one's inner passion and to any meaningful purpose other than the heroic victories at work which are simply trophies of a man's self worth. Men go on heroic quests with out first daring to ask themselves: "Does this feed my soul? Does it serve any purpose for the common good?" Sam Keen writes,

> Somehow men got so lost in the doing that we forgot to pause and ask, "What is worth doing? What of value are we creating--destroying--within the economic order?" Today we need to stop the world for a while and look carefully at where our industry is taking us....Our dignity as men lies not in exhausting ourselves in work but in discovering our vocation (Keen 1991, 66).
Aberrant expressions of the hero myth have not only created an unauthentic sense of self and disconnection from relationships, they have sent men on quest which are divergent from meaningful vocations. Like the mythical hero who takes the wrong turn on a quest, too many men have failed to listen inwardly to the voice of their hearts and have been lead on journey's that take them away from a meaningful life purpose. If we as men are to find the fulfillment we want in our vocational life, then we must be nurtured by a spirituality that gives a sense of calling and purpose to our work other than the egocentric, individualistic reasons that typically drive us in our work. For many of us as men, what we do as an occupation has become equivalent with "earning a living" or as my dad use to call it, "bringing home the bacon." It has lacked the richer meaning implied by the word vocation.

Vocation comes from the Latin which means "to call", meaning that for a person to have a vocation is to be called into a work. Such a calling is both an inward experience and an outer experience. Inwardly, we feel called by that which enliven us, even when, perhaps especially when, it is risky and challenging work. To be called inwardly is to feel that we are involved in a work which feeds a passion within us. It is to be driven by eros, that which fulfills our deepest desires. Outwardly, a vocation means being called by some ideal or purpose which is larger than ourselves. It is not enough to dedicate our lives to work which may serve something
within us when it does not serve to connect us to the needs of the community. As I have argued throughout this paper, healthy development finds its expression in relationships and in contributing to a larger purpose. A doctor is called by the virtue of "health". A retail merchant by the virtues of "material need". An actor is called by the virtue of "pleasure". We will find fulfillment and meaning by what we do for a vocation when our work feeds a desire within and connects us to a larger, worthy purpose.

We can turn to the scriptures to the life of Jesus to get a fuller sense of the meaning of having a vocation. We need to be careful in doing so since the temptation of the church through the ages has been to suggest that our calls are all the same as Jesus, encouraging us to belittle the individual character of the vocations we have each been given. As Brock has affirmed the power of eros, the power of God is incarnated in the community with each of us having our own unique gifts and roles which contribute to the larger purpose (Brock 1993, 52). What the scriptures do offer us is a sense through Jesus of how we come to claim our individual calls and how to overcome the temptations which can cause us to deny them. Jesus can become our model of how a man (or a woman) comes to claim his own identity and to struggle to steadfastly and aggressively set our hearts and minds to fulfilling our purpose. The traditional virtues of masculinity of directness, aggression, hardness can serve us well in this
task of claiming and maintaining our purpose, if we dare to be open and vulnerable and compassionate enough to be aware of the leading of our heart and the needs of the community for our gifts.

The synoptic gospels record the ministry of Jesus beginning with the rite of initiation of baptism from John the Baptist. It is appropriate that Jesus should begin his ministry by being initiated by another man into a new stage in his life. Our vocations are not, as we sometimes have imagined, an independent choice of our own doing, but are supported by the community of those who surround us. It is from the community that our vocations are defined and from our community we are given the assurance and confirmation which we need. As men, we especially need the confirmation and support of other men. In going to John the Baptist, Jesus like all of us seeks to find the recognition from another man that something larger than ourselves has called us in to our vocation. John the Baptist with his camel hair clothing and leather belt, locust and honey food, is not unlike the "wild man" Robert Bly describes in the Iron John myth. The wild man empowers and guides a man on the path of his vocation. Gerald Slusser points our that John represents that part of the psyche that pushes a man beyond instinctual concerns to responsibility in the life of the community (Slusser 1986, 71).
Baptism represents a passage from one life into the next life. Jesus' baptism confirms outwardly the inward sense of calling he has had from God to go forth and minister as God's servant. Something of his former life is laid to rest, and a new beginning in the form of a vocation is begun. As soon as Jesus rises out of the water we are told that a voice from heaven spoke to him: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17, NRSV)." God the Father is heard giving an unequivocal blessing to Jesus. We need to note the intensely personal nature of this blessing. God affirms the very being of Jesus with out conditions or hesitations. Jesus' value is confirmed by God as God originally blessed the creation in the beginning by calling it good. This blessing represents a deep connection to God the Father, one which helps Jesus secure an abiding sense of confidence, worth, balance, and power. Such blessings by fathers of their sons is a common theme in the Old Testament. A father's blessing signified that the wealth and well being of the father is passed on to the son. The torch of masculinity is passed on to the son which will empower him to be faithful in his vocation. In such a blessing God the Father instill in Jesus his son something of his authority, goodness, and purpose.

What Jesus experiences is what every man wants from his father: an unconditional affirmation of his value. If fathers have been truly present and empathetically attuned to their
sons, their sons have a sense that they are in their own being valuable. This requires fathers who have themselves have been blessed, who do not live out of a false masculinity which detaches them from their sons. Sons who have the good fortune to have such an unconditional presence in their lives are empowered by it. They will dare to enter into a vocation with confidence and a sense of fullness of self that is not easily depleted. They are able to risk and endure the inevitable blows to the self which come with daring to take on a vital vocation (Vogt 1991, 239).

The blessing of God the Father will be the strength which will empower Jesus to become a blessing to the marginalized he will encounter in his ministry. But Jesus can not begin his ministry until he has first encountered his own trials and temptations, until he himself has experienced and overcome his own demons. Jesus will be a healer, but he will be a wounded healer, one whose power comes from knowing his own wounds and the source to heal them. The temptations Jesus experiences in the desert in the synoptic gospels offers Jesus a chance to deal with his own wounds as they challenge the sense of inner confidence that Jesus gains from his Father.

The three temptations which Matthew describes all have one theme in common: they are the temptation to an inflated ego that does not know its limits (Matthew 4:1-11, NRSV). The temptation is to misconstrue his divine son-ship as the power to do the miraculous (Schweizer, 1975, 62). Satan shrewdly
entices Jesus to inflate his ego and misconstrue his son-ship by questioning the security of Jesus' identity: "If you are the Son of God then..." Jesus is asked to prove his son-ship by having an inflated sense of himself. This is precisely the problems I have described as the dilemma of an inflated hero masculinity. An insecurity about one's masculinity lead to the development of an inflated masculinity which constantly must prove itself by betraying it's true identity.

We can see in each of the temptations the various dangers of an inflated hero masculinity which I have been confronting in this chapter. The temptation to turn stones into bread is like our temptation as men to prove ourselves all powerful, more than human. The temptation to leap off of the pentacle of the temple is the temptation to separate ourselves from the rest of humanity by claiming superiority. The temptation to bow down and worship Satan for the wealth and domination of the world is our temptation to seek a vocation which does not serve a transcendent purpose for the common good.

Jesus is able to overcome these temptations by trusting the inner connection he has with his Father. Because of his Father's blessing he has an inherent sense of his own value that is not overcome even in times of great vulnerability. This sense of himself will be challenged many more times in Jesus' ministry. The greatest challenge comes when being faithful to his vocation means death on the cross. Jesus dares to wonder if the path he has chosen is indeed the
correct one and if his Father does in fact love him. Those who stand at the cross jeering at Jesus saying the same words of Satan in the desert, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross (Matthew 27:39, NRSV)." In such a moment Jesus identifies with the sense of abandonment we as men have often felt in our relationship with our fathers: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me (Matthew 27:46, NRSV)?" Jesus knows the same feeling of emptiness which exist when a man has not been blessed by his father. And yet, Jesus remains faithful to his vocation and fully identifies with our humanity. In the time he feels most abandoned by God, he still dares to trust in the divine presence. In so doing he discovered the faithfulness of God the Father to him in the resurrection.

This interpretation of the death of Jesus differs with traditional views of atonement. I believe this is necessary if we are to have a male spirituality which can heal the father wound in men. Traditional ideas of God the Father willing and requiring Jesus' death, are not healing for men. Such images of God only reflect and perpetuate the experience of abandonment by our own fathers. It isn't that Jesus must die because some cosmic system of justice requires it, but because it is the tragedy of our existence that faithfulness to a compassionate vocation is a challenge the status quo of a world built on the ideals of an inflated heroic myth. Thus, when Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane finally says, "yet not what I want, but what you want," he is not referring to God's
will that he should die on the cross (Matthew 26:36-46, NRSV). Rather, Jesus is referring to God's will that he be true to his vocation, that he not to betray the essence of who he is and what his life has been about.

The resurrection is God's affirmation and vindication of Jesus as his son. We can view the resurrection as an affirmation of the bond between God the Father and Jesus. It is an assurance that God does not abandon those he has blessed. The Apostle Paul will later say this on behalf of all the children of God: "If God is for us, who is against us?....Who will separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:31, 35, NRSV)?" The cross and resurrection affirm that we can dare to believe that there is a Father who will stand faithfully with us when we have the courage to be faithful to our true nature, to living a life in radical relationship to others, and hold fast to our purposeful vocation.

Jesus has inverted the hero myth and offered us a new image of God as our Father and new possibilities for masculinity. Such a Father can heal the deep father wounds of men and bestow a new masculinity to his sons. This masculinity demands all the fortitude, courage, strength, willfullness that we have celebrated as the essence of manhood. But these qualities are inverted in the service of authenticity, radical relationships, and purposeful, life giving vocations.
CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING

The Experience of Being Fathered

William Faulkner's *The Reivers* is a comic tale about a young boy Lucius who is coming of age. He is persuaded by Boon, one of his family's employees, to steal his grandfather's car and to make a trip to Memphis where they are involved in a series of misadventures involving a brothel, horse smuggling, gambling, and jail. In the experience, little Lucius comes home to his small home town, a boy who has come of age, but also a boy who must face his grandfather, the man he admires most in the world. What will he say to his grandfather? How can he endure his grandfather's disappointment?

Lucius comes home and his father takes him down in the cellar to whip the boy with his razor strap. But the grandfather intercedes saying to the father:

"Let me handle this."
"No", the father insist, "this is what you would have done to me 20 years ago."
"Maybe I have more sense now."

Then the father gone, the door closed again. Grandfather sat in the rocking chair: not fat but with the right amount of paunch to fill the white waist coat and make the heavy gold watch chain hang right.

"I lied", the boy said.
"Come here," the Grandfather commanded.
"I can't," I said, "I lied, I tell you."
"I know it," he said.
"Then do something about it. Do anything, just so it's something."
"I can't," he said.
"There ain't anything to do? Not anything?"
"I didn't say that," grandfather said, "I said I couldn't, you can."
"What?" I said. "How can I forget it? Tell me how to."
"You can't," he said. "Nothing is every
forgotten. Nothing is ever lost. It's too valuable."

"Then what can I do?"
"Live with it," Grandfather said.
"Live with it? You mean, forever? For the rest of my life? Not ever get rid of it? Never? I can't. Don't you see I can't?"
"Yes, you can," he said. "You will." A gentleman always does. A gentleman can live through anything. He faces anything. A gentleman accepts the responsibility of his actions and bears the burden of their consequences, even when he did not himself instigate them but only acquiesced to them, didn't say no though he knew he should.

"Come here!"

Then I was crying hard, bawling, standing between his knees, one of his hands at the small of my back, the other at the back of my head holding my face down against his stiff collar and shirt and I could smell---the starch and shaving lotion and chewing tobacco and benzine where Grandmother had cleaned a spot from his coat, and always a faint smell of whiskey which I always believed was from the first toddy which he took in bed in the morning before he got up.....

"There," he said at last. "That should have emptied the cistern. Now go wash your face. A gentleman cries too, but he always washes his face (Faulkner 1962, 301-303)

Few stories express for me the image of what I would want in a father than this one by Faulkner. No matter how often I have read the story, it has had the power to move me. It is not difficult for me to identify with Lucius: the shame, the guilt, the fear, the hurt of Lucius, who is struggling to come to terms with the life changing experiences that have taken him from boyhood into the beginnings of manhood. The story brings memories from my own past of the countless times as a young boy becoming a young man, I was exposed to the ways of the world. The excitement and the mystery of the reality of an adult world was mixed with the painful confusion and the
guilt of the loss of my innocence. There were the things I saw, heard, learned that my mother and father wouldn't have had me see, hear, and learn. As Faulkner has Lucius saying, "...the things I had had to learn that I wasn't even ready for yet, had no where to store them or anywhere to lay them down... (Faulkner 1962, 300)." We know as men what those experiences are like and how we long to have someone help us to traverse through such changes, and to find a place in our hearts to hold them. And yet, most of us were usually too ashamed and fearful to dare to ask for the support we needed.

Sam Keen has said that we do not stand as lone men tall against the sunset, but with the generations of our fathers and grandfathers who have come before us. We are connected by a porous membrane through which comes impulses of care, wisdom, and delight. The truly heroic men becomes heroic because they have been "cradled in the hearts and initiated in the arms of their fathers (Keen 1991, 185)." Lucius is taken down into the cellar of his home by his grandfather who holds him in that space and initiates him in his arms, creating a place in the depths of Lucius' own heart, an inner cellar to store his experiences, to bear his pain, to own his responsibility. "Live with it", the grandfather says, "A gentleman can live through anything." This is not the stoic endurance of experiences, that has been the common way of dealing with life for men, but a living into the breath and depth of our experiences and feelings. To be a "gentleman"
one must dare to embrace the fullness of an experience, to bear even the pain and make it a friend. "Nothing is ever lost. It's too valuable."

There is a rich blessing bestowed on Lucius that allows him to claim his manhood. The embrace of the "crying hard, bawling" Lucius by his wise, secure grandfather is Lucius' embracing of his own manhood. In being held to the body of his grandfather he can know what it feels and smells like to be a man. Weakness and strength are merged together, as he is initiated into manhood in the arms of his grandfather. He leaves that embrace more able to embrace himself as a man. There is developing in him the kind of inner strength which can only come in connection and in embodiment. The connection with his grandfather evokes in Lucius an esteem and reverence for his manhood. "A gentleman cries too, but he always washes his face."

Initiations into a secure masculinity comes over time and at the hands of men like the boy's grandfather who are themselves secure in their masculinity. We can not whip ourselves or be whipped into shape by feats of courage, acts of sheer willpower, or head strong hard work (Keen 1991, 185). The kind of masculinity represented by Lucius' dutiful father who feels he must perform the necessary role of a dad and whip his son with a razor strap does not understand and is not connected to his own heart or attuned to the deeper needs of his son. Such fathering embitters a son, creating only
hostility towards the father. We can see such hostility being nursed by Lucius' father towards the grandfather whom he calls "Boss". "This is what you would have done to me twenty years ago," Lucius' father says after being prevented by the grandfather from razor strapping his son. And the grandfather replies, "Maybe I have more sense now (Faulkner 1962, 301)."

Pastoral counselors often see men in counseling who perhaps for the first time in their lives are beginning to acknowledge that something is broken in themselves, that something is missing and needs healing. This can often be traced back to the relationship with their fathers who either were not present or exemplified an approach to fathering that is like that of Lucius' father. When reconciliation with the father (either inner or outer) has not occurred such men don't posses the kind of secure masculinity that will enable them to be grounded in themselves, in their relationship, and in their vocations. "They betray a kind of floundering in relationships and work, a vulnerability to addictions, and an inability to be playful (Vogt & Sirridge 1991, 193)." Both relationship with men and with women tend to be unsatisfactory (Vogt & Sirridge 1991, 193). They may work hard at trying to be the man they think they should be, but it is never good enough to overcome the empty places inside them.

In the next several pages I want to explore the role of the pastoral counselors in helping men do the work of developing a securer masculinity. The pastoral counselor can
help men have a grounded masculinity which is reflective of masculinity represented by Jesus. I want to differentiate two roles for pastoral counselors which in reality are intricately related with one another. The first is the role of the pastoral counselor to help men take the inward journey into his heart, his experiences, and his body. The inward journey involves providing a man with a home within the self in which to hold his experiences and feelings (as the grandfather does for Lucius). The second role for the pastoral counselor is the role of the mentor. Pastoral counselors can enable men who lacked needed fathering find a sense of place within the world of relationships and meaningful vocations. This is the outward journey which helps a man connect his authentic self to the world so that his need to be loved and to love can be met.

The Inward Journey: Being at Home with One's Self

The idea of the need for a "place" or a "home" has strong biblical roots and is therefore a rich image with which to imagine our work as pastoral counselor. The history of Israel

1 The idea of an inward journey and an outward journey is similar to Sam Keen's description of the last two stages of the hero's journey: initiation (primarily an inward journey) and reintegration (the outward business of practicing a vocation in the community). I prefer a more dynamic process, because I believe developing a mature sense of masculinity is an on-going process that is always dynamically intra-relational and inter-relational. Each part of the journey supports and makes possible the other part of the journey.
imagine our work as pastoral counselor. The history of Israel is the history of a people who long to find a place in which to dwell, a land flowing with milk and honey. Psalm 84 speaks of the desire to dwell in the house of God: "How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord... (Psalm 84, NRSV)." The idea of the kingdom of God expresses the longing for a place both within the self where God's peace rules and the hope for a community on earth as a place of peace, justice, and intimacy. In John's gospel, Jesus promises the disciples, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:2, NRSV)?" And then the incredible promise of Jesus to his disciples assures them (and us) that he abides with them always: "Make your home in me, as I make mine in you (John 15:4, Jerusalem Bible)." We are assured in all of these scriptures that there is a God who recognizes our need for a place where we can both belong and know the intimate presence of God. To dwell with God or to have God dwell with us is to have a place of refuge and a place where we can be rejuvenated in our spirit.

The idea of "place" has been used oppressively as well, as when we say, "I put her in her place" or "a woman's place is in the home" or the idea that "a man's home is his castle" (i.e. he is king and rules the roost). But the dominant biblical vision is for a place both within the self and in the
creation where there is wholeness and harmony (i.e. shalom) characterized by an inversion of the values of society which I explored in the previous chapter. As men we need a place where we can be at home with our embodied selves and we need to know that our relationships and vocations provide a vital place for ourselves in the world. The dominate images of masculinity around the hero myth have suggested that to be a man we must always be on our heroic adventures without having to settle into ourselves or to have a enduring dwelling places as havens for meaningful relationships.

Henri Nouwen is especially helpful in directing us towards the inward journey of being "at home" with ourselves. He writes that

"Home is that place where we do not have to be afraid but can let go of our defenses and be free, free from worries, free from tensions, free from pressures. Home is where we can laugh and cry, embrace and dance....Home is where we can rest and be healed (Nouwen 1989, 27)."

For us as men, who spend so much of our time proving ourselves by doing, Nouwen's idea of "home" offers us a unique place simply "to be". It speaks to our longing for and need of a place where we know that we belong, where we can feel safe enough, and loved enough to let down and dare to embrace the fullness of our experiences. Pastoral counselors can offer men a space in which to learn to simply be with themselves, to get to know our feels and experiences, to listen to our bodies. Parts of a man's experience which have been denied can be embraces.
In order to make a place a home which is different from the homes many men have come from, pastoral counselors are persons who are, like Jesus, "full of grace and truth (John 1:14, NRSV)." It requires grace in a home to create the kind of safe place which makes the speaking and seeing of the truth possible. Pastoral counseling differs from the dysfunctional home in that the therapist is committed to a non-condemning attitude towards the client. He or she holds the client in a space which communicates, "I am for you and not against you", even when the therapist confronts the client. Grace makes the truth possible. Without it, a client rightfully moves to protect himself from the judgments of the therapist. But grace without truth is equally condemning. What many men have lacked in their relationships with their fathers is any expression of the truth. They were not offered a balance of the needed praise, encouragement, and corrective discipline that enabled them to learn and grow. Truth provides an honest way of knowing one's self, one's strengths and limitations. Grace and truth are two of the main-stays of nourishment in the place where pastoral counseling builds healthy development. Grace prevents truth from being cruel; truth prevents grace from being sentimental and meaningless.

An example of the role of the pastoral counselor as creating a space within a man's heart in which to hold himself comes to mind from a friend's experience in counseling. "Bob" a friend described his first experience of seeing a pastoral
counselor because of a persistent depression a year after the death of his father. He approached the counseling much as he had his life, as a place where he could get the right instructions of how he could accomplish getting over something (in this case his depression) and get on with his busy life. But the counselor wasn't buying it. The counselor sat quietly until Bob ran out of words with which to fill up the empty space of the room. In frustration he demanded that his counselor perform his duty and tell him what he needed to do to get on with his life. The counselor simply directed Bob back to what he was feeling. Over time Bob discovered the safe place the therapist had worked to create, and a flood of sorrow, guilt, and anger at his dad begin to find expression. In being provided with such a "home" where both grace and truth were present, Bob began the difficult work of befriending the lost parts of himself which he had hidden from for so many years in his life. He began to deal with the years of pent up disappointment and anger at his dad for not being fully present in his life. He was able to take the kind of "holding place" he experience in the room with his therapist into his own self.

This is like the descent of Lucius into the cellar, into a place where he could with the guidance of an older man learn to embrace the parts of himself he would just as soon be rid of. Only through such embracing could he find a secure sense of masculinity, one that is authentic and embodied. In the
case of Bob it meant coming to terms with the father wound and all the pain which surrounded it. The counselor does not replace the father in this role. No one can fill the hole left by the absence of the father. Indeed one of the jobs of the pastoral counselor is to help the men grieve the losses of that relationship. Rather, the counselor provided a place where Bob could embrace the empty spaces. By providing a holding space for Bob and his grief through the counselor’s empathetic understanding, Bob was given a blessing for all parts of his experience, one not based on his accomplishments but on his unique and full masculine self. Such therapy provided him with a more secure and grounded self, one which had room for his pain as well as his more accomplished, active side.

In this kind of home, one which was very different from Bob’s original home, an inner reconciliation between Bob and his father took place. Jesus’ word about being one with the father can be reflective of the peace and inner reconciliation that has taken place: "I and the Father are one (John 10:30, NRSV)." The counselor in creating a place within Bob for him to hold all aspects of himself becomes a symbolic presence of a new kind of fathering with encourages a more authentic masculinity. This experience in therapy can open new possibilities from which new images of God can emerge. The opportunity is presented for a man to discover a new kind of Father abiding with him.
I am suggesting that in taking a man on the inward journey of creating a home within the self, the pastoral counselor is also creating the possibility for a deep and meaningful spiritual life. As a man is reconnected to his true self, the pastoral counselor may enable a man to pray from the depth of his self and his heart, perhaps for the first time. Prayer is no longer done by the dutiful son or not done by the rebellious son, but is expressed out of the hunger of a son desiring to share his life with a waiting and responsive father. This can happen because the projections of previous negative God images have been recognized and replaced with a new faith in a God who is truthful and graceful. This is one of the points at which pastoral counseling and disciplining are one and the same act of ministry.

The Outward Journey: Finding One's Place in the World

I have suggested throughout this paper that the lack of fully available fathers who are empathetically attuned to their sons has left a gap in men's lives that makes being in the process of relationships and in meaningful vocations difficult. One of the consistent insights of the men's movement has been the need for the presence of older men and others in a man's life who can provide the guidance that was lacking so that a man knows how to be in relationships and to find a meaningful "place" in the world.
Gregory Vogt and Stephen Sirridge call for the renewal of the idea of a male mentor in men's lives (Vogt, Sirridge 1991, 177-190). The word mentor suggests a person who can advise, warn, admonish, recognize, and appreciate. Such ideas may seem to suggest that a mentor is a person who is more like an instructor who tells a pupil what to do. But as these writers use the concept, the idea of a mentor is meant to suggest a person with the wisdom and experience to have an inner sense of his authority that places him in a position to direct a man in being meaningfully connected to the world in his relationships and vocation. The mentor is secure in his masculinity and therefore has nothing to prove or justify but can act as a coach who enables meaningful connection and fulfilling work.

I am not suggesting that pastoral counselors return to the time when pastoral counseling was seen as benevolent advice which comes down from on high to needy parishioners. Such out-dated ideas of counseling reflect the unhealthy expressions of the hero myth. Rather, I believe that pastoral counselors (both men and women) who are secure in themselves and are clear about their agendas in working with men do have an inner authority and knowledge which places them in a position to open men to new possibilities that their fathers did not offer or which they reacted against from their fathers. Pastoral counselors, on the one hand, help men find a home within themselves, but on the other hand, having
provided this secure place for men, they are also in a position to provide the needed direction that will help men make a place for themselves in the world. Pastoral counselors can help men become aware of feelings and needs (to affirm and hold those feelings and needs), and they help men know how to make effective contact with the boundary between themselves and their world to get their needs met.

The task being a mentor for men can be challenging since the natural competitiveness of many men with other men and difficulties in expressing feelings and needs may make it difficult for men to be open for the direction they require. Also, the high degree of reactivity and anger of many men in relationships with their fathers may be transferred onto counselors (Vogt, Sirridge 1991, 181). These reaction and the resistance they create have to be identified and processed before a trusting relationship between the counselor and the counselee can be secured. The opportunity to experience this dynamic in the safe "place" of the counseling office can open up the possibilities for self-knowledge in the ways a man has cut himself off from asserting what he wants rather than always focusing on what he doesn't want. In moving beyond reactivity, a man can be challenged to listen to his own heart and to honor his own desires. The power of eros can be awaken in a man in a way that will allow him to "follow his bliss" in relationships and in his vocation. The therapist can help men discern this inner self and to imagine new possibilities.
This will also involve helping a man face the consequences of his decisions and to examine what his values are and their impact on both himself, his relationships, and his vocational life. If a counselor believes as I do that healthy development results in the ability to be meaningfully related and involved in a positive life purpose, then counseling will always involve an element of reflection on values and one's belief system. For a man to find greater fulfillment is his inward passion must be valued and connected to the needs of the community.

The outward journey, as the inner journey, creates the possibility for a prayerful and a spiritual life in men. Pastoral counselors are not simply giving helpful instruction and guidance to men, they are enabling men to form the dispositions of faith out of which men can be open to the on-going inner guidance which comes from God. Dispositions of bitterness, reactivity, and suspicion are replaced with dispositions of thankfulness, desire, and hopefulness. Prayer, meditation, and centering become avenues through which God the Father mentors men, continuing to shape within them new dispositions towards themselves, relationships, and their vocations.

The pastoral counselor takes a man on the inward journey of feeling at home with himself and the outward journey of making a place for himself in the world. This journey will begin when men come to counseling realizing that the ways he
has been attempting to be a man have impoverished his body and all but extinguished his passion. We can offer such men a new vision of being a man. As Sam Keen describes it, it is "a vision of man with fire in his belly and passion in his heart (Keen 1991, 7)." It is the same fire of the Spirit and passion of the heart that so filled Jesus and that still calls men to greater authenticity, intimate connection, and meaningful vocations.
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The writer, M. Allen Mothershed, is an ordained minister in the United Methodist church. He received his masters of divinity degree from Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, in 1983 where he attended for three years. He was ordained an elder in the United Methodist church in June, 1985 in the former North Mississippi annual conference. He served three years as associate pastor of St. John's United Methodist church in Greenwood Mississippi from 1983 to 1986. He was appointed from 1986 to 1989 to three rural United Methodist churches in the Mississippi Delta, Shelby, Duncan, and Alligator United Methodist churches. In 1989 to 1993 he served as associate pastor at Tupelo First United Methodist church also in Mississippi. In that appointment he became involved with divorce workshop ministries and single ministries and trained as a pastoral counselor with the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

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The thesis is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Art in Pastoral Counseling.

[Signature]

August 29, 1975

Date

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