

## **Ethical Holiness:**

### **An Intersubjective Movement of Presence in Creative Fidelity**

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In our present age, seismic shifts generate significant waves of transformation by a discerning exercise of practical prudence in response to the perennial yearning to experience the truth of being. The transitional movement from the predominant yet becoming dysfunctional monological structure of Cartesian *cogito*<sup>1</sup> to the dialogical quality of *I-thou* relations in the course of time, reaffirms the indispensability of mutual engagement in a growing and dynamic interpersonal relationship marked by honest communication. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, studies on public sphere conclusively disclose the widespread hunger for profound communal life with spiritual significance.<sup>2</sup> Intersubjective communion ushers us to the domains of ontological truth in the light of moral interaction. "No creativity is possible without the social and cultural context that provides the raw materials one uses- the conventions, ideas and institutions against which one must struggle to fashion one's authentic self."<sup>3</sup>

Web-related business economy has recently fabricated a hybrid parlance, "connexity" to obtain the magnificent symmetry of the two ideas: making "connection" and building "community." Leonard Sweet emphasizes that the "heart of postmodernity is a theological dyslexia: me/we, or the experience of individual-in-community. Postmoderns want to enjoy a self-identity within a connectional framework of neighborliness, civic virtue, and spiritual values."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> René Descartes prominently proposed "methodic doubt" into philosophy providing a subsequent developmental climate solipsism which seemingly appear as a irrefutable rule of reflective thinking. The cogito that unveils the ego is a solitary consciousness, a *res cogitans* that is not spatially extended, is not necessarily located in any body, and can be assured of its own existence exclusively as a conscious mind. Solipsism is sometimes expressed as the view that "I am the only mind which exists," or "My mental states are the only mental states." The solipsist can attach no meaning to the supposition that there could be thoughts, experiences, and emotions other than his own. For an extensive study of Descartes' epistemology see *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, *The magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict into Cooperation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 217. Sociologist Daniel Yankelovich has done extensive tracking specifically the American culture in the United States for forty years and thereafter concluded his studies of the public revealing an immense pool of goodwill all over the country for enhanced quality of life anchored in meaningful communal life. A Web site is a readily accessible point of social convergence to pursue research, learn specific skills of one's interest, connect with people, and enter relationships.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Golomb, *In search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (London: Routledge, 1995), 201.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century World* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 115-117.

*Imago Dei* in Judeo-Christian affirmation fundamentally conceives a ‘human agent’ as active participant, communal-historical being and co-creator of the moral orders in the universe. Its concomitant “rationally informed will” constitutes a potent force of molding circumstances which expresses the complementary proportion of “inherent autonomy” and “moral responsibility.” Thus, renewal in God’s image includes an intentional counterpart of a person to his/her growth process. It is a dynamic journey not in the context of solitude but through intersubjective communion with other selves. Paul exclaimed in Philippians 2:12 to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling.” The verb “work out” is in present imperative tense which implies a strong command to continue in making all possible efforts individually and collectively to eagerly preserve the faith and grow spiritually according to such divinely endowed eternal telos. Traditional evangelical emphasis on the conversion event as crisis experience has led at times to the neglect of understanding Christian life as a lifelong journey in its course of “becoming process.” “Discipleship entails a path to be walked and a goal to be reached.”<sup>5</sup> We are usually tempted to succumb to the aesthetic notions of holiness apart from ethical responsibility involved in it by intersubjective engagements. Ideas about holiness, truth, value, and goodness are basically relational not abstract. The subjective thinker who by his activity commits himself to an understanding of the truth which, by the manner his existence, he is; he seeks to comprehend himself, not as an abstraction, but as an ethically engaged, existing subject.

According to the biblical account, the principle of true living always signifies being in the presence of others within the context of creative communion and meaningful fellowship. Death implies absolute solitude due to undesirable severance from all vital links. Beings gifted with a spiritual nature have the ability to participate in edifying a social organism because reciprocity presupposes a certain con-naturality. Totally distinct and unique individuals with virtually nothing in common would be devoid of unifying any bonds of communion. Community emerges out of this intimate relationship by virtue of mutual acceptance of differences, valuing the individuality of everyone, willingness to sacrifice oneself for a greater purpose, doing away with formalities.<sup>6</sup>

Is it in the faculties that reflect the Trinitarian relationships, and in what way, or does it lie principally in the acts of knowing and loving God? *Imago Dei* reflects the social nature of Trinitarian relationships and the human potentials ingrained in their faculties in order to render us *capax Dei*, capable of knowing and loving God, and to achieve ontological growth and spiritual maturity as we journey together in life. It also presupposes harmony between our spiritual faculties and actions that allows us to represent, however, imperfectly, the Trinitarian relationships, and to collaborate through knowledge and love in the perfection of the image.<sup>7</sup> Such proper understanding of *Imago Dei* is crucial for human

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<sup>5</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 231.

<sup>6</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Translated from the Portuguese by Paul Burns, (Great Britain, Burns & Oates, 1992), 128-30.

<sup>7</sup> Servais Pinckaers, *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, edited by John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus, Translated by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington, DC: The Catholic Press, 2005), 140-142. Humans dynamically resemble God in the measure which resides directly in the capacity as well as acts of contemplative knowing, active charity, and resolute imitation of God as they progress in these levels of essential virtues. “*Imago Dei* is established not only in relation to the divine nature but also in relation to the Trinity in persons. It is only by way of consequence that the image of God resides in our faculties, insofar as they are the principles of knowledge and love of God.” 135.

relationships. All human beings are to live in a partnership entailing commitment to mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation.<sup>8</sup> The presence of an “I” and “thou” relationship as a constitutive principle of dynamic communion in *Elohim*, a community of disposition and act in the divine essence, finds its creaturely *analogia relationis* in the relationship between man and woman.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, St. Thomas Aquinas describes freedom beginning with the definition supplied by Peter Lombard in the second book of the *Sentences*: “True free will is the faculty of reason and will, through which good is chosen with grace assisting, or evil with grace desisting.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, human faculties serve as enabling grace to achieve moral acts of excellence in conformity to what originally God desires us to be and do, as well as the built-in *a priori* discerning mechanism in determining something hostile to God’s intention.

The work of free choice is to place acts which possess the quality of truth and goodness, and which thus lead the human person toward his perfection and beatitude. Free will is therefore a power, progressively formed in us, to produce moral acts of excellence. Our freedom is without doubt an imperfect participation, but it is real participation, in the freedom of God, in such a way that the more it conforms to God through knowledge and love and grace, the more it grows as a power to perform works of excellence. A spiritual nature that manifests itself by the aspiration to truth, goodness, and beatitude, and by a sense of the other, expressed in a natural inclination to live in a society ordered by justice and friendship.<sup>11</sup>

Being bearers of *Imago Dei*, each human person is called in his or her concrete sphere of earthly existence to ethically represent and portray this embedded quality to all creation with resolute determination. After the fall, we are restored from our depraved nature and redeemed by God’s sacrificial love to conform in the image of Christ. References to such representations and therein to the reality of the creaturely analogue somehow provide conceptual illumination despite all historical difficulties surrounding the *analogia entis*.<sup>12</sup> Dr. John A. T. Robinson published in the *London Observer*, “Go deeper and deeper into your own life, into the relationships you have with other people, into the mysteries of life

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<sup>8</sup> Leroy T. Howe, *The Image of God: A theology for pastoral care and counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 38.

<sup>9</sup> Gerrit Corvelis Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God, Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 72.

<sup>10</sup> The original text from Lombard’s second book of the *Sentences* states, “*Liberum verum arbitrium est facultas et voluntatis, qua bonum eligitur gratia assistente, vel malum eadem desistente.*” Peter Lombard, In Sent. II 24.3 (Grottaferrata-Rome: Ed. Collegi S. Bonaventure, 1971), 452. The notion of “free will” confers on human being mastery over his actions and enables him to collaborate in the work of providence, for himself and for others. Following St. John Damascene, St. Thomas believes that the image of God in human beings lies precisely in their free will. Pinckaers, *Reader*, 132; cf. ST I-II, prologue: “Since, as Damascene states (De Fide Orthod. II, 12), man is said to be made to God’s image, insofar as the image implies an intelligent being endowed with free will and self-movement: now that we have treated the exemplar, i.e., God, and those things which came forth from the power of God in accordance with His will; it remains for us to treat of His image, i.e., man, inasmuch as he too is the principle of his actions, as having free will and control of his actions.” A human being is made in the image of God insofar as he is an intelligent being endowed with free will and self-movement.

<sup>11</sup> Pinckaers, *The Pinckaers Reader*, 138-139.

<sup>12</sup> Berkouwer, *Man*, 114.

and death, and as you go into those depths you will meet him who transcends everything that you can ever think or do or be.”

### ***Kenosis as Sine Qua Non of Ontological Growth***

According to the ancient truth, the health of the self comes, not by concentrating on the self alone, but, by such dedication to something outside the self, the self is thereby forgotten. The more I concentrate on my own existence exclusively, “the less do I exist” and the more I free myself from such “egocentrism the more do I exist”<sup>13</sup> The growth of being basically requires the deliberate act of self-emptying. Holiness is a form of ontological growth achieved through a humble spirit of consecration. *Sine qua non* is a late Latin expression which means “without which not.” *Sine* is a preposition meaning “without.” *Qua* is an adverb meaning “in so far as; in the capacity or character of; as.” *Non* is a prefix in common use in the sense of “not.” The *sine qua non* of anything is the ingredient which is necessary to make it what it is. Without it, the thing does not exist. At this juncture, kenosis is a prerequisite movement of infinite resignation inasmuch as the goal of Christlike quality of life demands an initial act of self-renunciation prior to the leap of faith. We have to be willing to discard our preoccupation with worldly antiques before we can make ourselves open to embrace the holiness mindset. “Repudiation precedes recreation” motif unveils before us the most crucial ethical principle involved in cultivating a sanctified lifestyle. In the final analysis, the initial step to living a Spirit-filled life is death to self which also applies to particular development of I-thou relationship. Paulo Coelho<sup>14</sup> illustrates this truth by drawing a proximate conceptual parallelism with emptying the cup. In his serious attempt to search for knowledge, a certain university professor visited a famous Zen master in Kyoto. While the monk was serving tea, the professor displayed his erudition by analyzing some writings, interpreting traditional narratives, deliberating on the ancient processes of meditation, and commenting on mystical and physical exercises. He exhausted all means possible to impress his host in the pretext of making his way to be accepted as a disciple. As the professor performed intellectual deliberations verbally, the monk unceasingly filled his cup until it overflowed, and the tea began to spill out across the whole table. What are you doing? Can’t you see the cup is full, and that nothing more will fit in it? Your soul is like this cup - replied the master. How can I teach you the true art of Zen Buddhism, if it is already filled with theories?

Kierkegaard calls the Infinite movement of resignation *Religiousness A* as a new pathos that brings one beyond ethical reliance and the willingness to sacrifice the relative for the sake of one’s relation to the absolute. By emptying oneself in the infinite, the individual receives his/her eternal consciousness. The negation of the individual’s reliance upon himself in relation to the absolute telos determines the degree of spiritual readiness for a decisive leap into the religious sphere of existence. Humility, resignation, consecration are essential prerequisites to faith. Pride and self-sufficiency are effective barriers to a relationship with God.<sup>15</sup> The act of total self-renunciation radically dissociates a

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<sup>13</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol.2, *Faith and Reality*, Translated by René Hague (London: The Harvill Press. 1951), 34.

<sup>14</sup> Paulo Coelho, *The Warrior of the Light*, volume 3 (www.Feedbookscom), 42.

<sup>15</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Sickness Unto Death*, Trans. With Introduction and Notes by Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press, 1973), 34, 48; cf. also Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, eds. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1992), 396.

subject person from his or her finite immediacy as the first genuine expression for the relationship to the absolute telos. Albeit the individual endures temporality but he has indeed acquired eternal validity. The finite thou ought to abandon all aesthetic and ethical immediacies to divest the self from any mundane encumbrances toward the establishment of intimate personal relationship and meaningful fellowship. In the kenotic principle (Philippians 2:5-8), the second Person of the Trinity has modeled humility in the form of infinite resignation; “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross.” Only by giving up something of value do we find the highest value in subject-subject communion.

For example, there is more than a single way of “knowing” a flower. One way (more Western, more modern) of “knowing a flower is to be full of oneself, one’s wits and wisdom, and to subject that flower to withering critique. First way of knowing a flower is to experiment with it as something separate, to stand at a distance from it and pick it apart.

The other way (more Biblical, more Eastern) of knowing is really a way of “unknowing”: to be “empty” of oneself and to let the flower reveal itself as it is. This second way of knowing a flower is to experience it, to enter in rather than stand back; to stand under (there is no ultimate understanding without standing under) and participate in its beauty.

In one you are rich-full of yourself. In one you are poor-empty of yourself. In one you are a distant observer or critic. In one you are an intimate lover. In the experimental you keep something at arm’s length distance; it is called critical detachment. In the experiential you put your arms around something; it is called loving embrace.<sup>16</sup>

A conscious experience of *imago Dei* seeks to fulfill inner exigency as a declaration of commitment to dedicate oneself for a higher end. The motivating factor of self-dedication is not something external but it emanates from the depths of one’s own life in a form of inner demand. My ideal being resides within the deep domains of myself, empowering my noble senses to experience the call or vocation, even the obligation, to consecrate my life for an ultimate value.<sup>17</sup> Offering one’s life does not mean losing the self in oblivion because the essence of self-sacrifice is essentially creative not destructive. Imposing certain common sense grid to understand the act itself rationally in terms of making a fair trade off or an exchange of goods where I give something in order to get something in return, forfeits the gist of such existential irony present in the dynamic character of kenosis. In this case giving up everything for nothing is utter madness. Therefore, if we sympathetically participate in the experience of the person who offers his life, we will recognize, that he has, without any doubt at all, the feeling that through self-sacrifice he is reaching self-fulfillment.<sup>18</sup> Being so, martyr’s profound assurance does not completely transcend the biological categories since whether or not those extraordinary heroes explicitly give credence to eschatological significance of the “beyond,” they lived and acted as though

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<sup>16</sup> Sweet, *Postmodern*, 145-146.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas C. Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel’s The Mystery of Being* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2006), 76.

<sup>18</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol.1, *Reflection and Mystery*, Translated by R. Hague, (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press. 2001), 165-166.

death might be really, and in a supreme sense, life.<sup>19</sup> Laying down one's life is the consequence of experiencing the acceptance of a call as the most meaningful and fulfilling way of participation in preserving something of utmost importance. Nobody would be willing to die for an abstraction that ends in total annihilation. Just as sacrifice is the highest form of availability, laying down one's life for the sake of other, thus essentially creative and integrative; suicide is essentially a refusal, an act out of despair.

Kenotic ethical framework embodying the "self-emptying-self-giving" dialectic at the higher level of personal communion toward the achievement of ontological growth finds its culmination in the tenet of creative fidelity. Practicing God's presence, the absolute Thou, in such a way that our being gradually conforms to the desirable divine attributes through a meaningful finite I-thou encounter reveals how human agents as bearers of imago Dei interactively influence each other within the sphere of faithfulness. Our fidelity is a mode of participation in the mystery of being.

The idea of fidelity is proximately associated with loyalty. In fact, Marcel who first coined the concept of creative fidelity, "finds a close similarity between his teaching and that of the American Philosopher Josiah Royce, who saw in "loyalty to loyalty" the foundation of morality and of human community."<sup>20</sup>

Fidelity always implies an unconditional vow to another person, a commitment to the other. Fidelity is an abdication to the preservation of one's title to self-esteem; its axis is not self at all but another. It is spontaneous and unimposed presence of an I to a Thou. The creation of the self actually is accomplished via an emergence to a Thou level of reality: I create myself in response to an invocation which can only come from a Thou. It is a call to which I answer 'present.' In saying 'here' I create my own self in the presence of a Thou. Marcel succinctly declares that fidelity is "the active perpetuation of presence."<sup>21</sup>

In other words, it is inevitably the person who is most consecrated and faithful who is most available. Availability and fidelity go hand in hand. The creative power of person-oriented response to invocation definitely enhances the growth of being. Fidelity equips the self with resolute passion to achieve identity, unity, triumph over the corrosive acids of time. Making promises entails taking responsibility to be something for another person; it is a call into creative relationship in the light of a vow or pledge despite the vicissitudes of time. Fidelity is neither an unreasonably obstinate adherence to one's duty nor mere constancy to preserve the status quo but a creative cooperation with the other in advancing participated freedom. "Hence it involves continuous vigilance against the inertia of conformism and the sclerosis of habit."<sup>22</sup> As authentic existence always presupposes a subject person as homo viator or pilgrim in the temporal world, fidelity becomes a betrayal to static conservatism which provides ready-made close system encouraging lethargic conformism.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>20</sup> Varghese J. Manimala, *Being, Person, And Community: A Study of intersubjectivity in Existentialism With Special Reference to Marcel, Sartre and the Concept of Sangha in in Buddhism*, Forword by Paimundo Panikkar (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1991), 161.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Gallangher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), 70.

<sup>22</sup> Sam Keen, *Gabriel Marcel* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd., 1966), 35.

Fidelity also implies committing an unknown bundle. It does not calculate and objectify. It is, in fact, a leap into the dark. "In swearing fidelity to a person, I do not know what future awaits us or even, in a sense, what person will he be tomorrow; the very fact of my not knowing is what gives worth and weight to my promise."<sup>23</sup> Keeping promises in marital life is a moment by moment realization. The marriage which is a promise and pledge grows to its fullness in the course of time. Fidelity as perpetuation of personal presence and response to a call implies a commitment directed to the other person not to oneself. "The attempt to understand the meaning of the promises leads us to the notion of an intersubjective presence in which the persons involved are mutually necessary to one another. I can pledge myself only to the extent that I do not retain complete autonomy."<sup>24</sup>

Faith, understood as commitment, is far more enriching and productive because it carries with it the richness of a binding obligation. Faith is a gathering together of all the forces of our being and putting these forces at the disposal of others- Absolute Thou and the finite thou. Through faith as genuine commitment, I engage in a mystical encounter with the other. Such encounter which implies a binding obligation, since it carries with it a complete bundling together of all the forces of being, adds a new dimension both to me and the other or the thou. By becoming spiritually available to my neighbors, I immediately transcend the narrow limits of my own being. I overcome the restrictions of my egocentricity and discover at this moment the Absolute Thou. I find that God is the very ground of my faith and fidelity; I invoke Him and enter into loving communion with Him.<sup>25</sup>

Fidelity is an act of the total person taking responsibility for another. As such it is the response to an appeal which recognizes in the other person something of lasting value. We treat the other not as a means but as an end and thereby upholds human dignity. The family is the best example of fidelity and commitment where the concepts of promise, presence and availability spontaneously function. The members of the family become responsible for one another and there is a mutual growth assured through this exercise of responsibility. Indeed, it is a universally observable maxim that to maintain the mystery of the family would restore the balance of our society<sup>26</sup> even in the postmodern turn.

What would be the repercussion if the path of fidelity assumes monological direction absolutely devoid of response? Karol Wojtyła discusses the experience of the ego conditioned by the reflexive function of consciousness. The "reflexiveness of consciousness denotes that consciousness, so to speak, turns back naturally upon the subject, if thereby the subjectiveness of the subject is brought into prominence in experience."<sup>27</sup> In other words, the subject himself experiences his own act toward the other person apart from reciprocal movement. If the person sows unconditional love even without favorable responses whatsoever from the recipient, the acting subject still reaps the benefits of such subjectiveness. Ethical engagements according to the cardinal virtues primarily edify the acting person who experiences his own attitudes, motivations, and behaviors; thereby he/she pursues in some ways the growth of being.

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<sup>23</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. K. Farrer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 47. Originally published as *Etre et Avoir* (Paris: Aubier, 1935).

<sup>24</sup> Gallangher, *Marcel*, 56-57.

<sup>25</sup> Marcel, *Being*, 78-79.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>27</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person. Translated from the Polish by Andrzej Potocki. "This definitive text of the work established in collaboration with the author by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka." Analecta Husserliana*, Vol. X. Dordrecht-Holland, Boston-USA, London-UK: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 24.

However, without a response to the call there is no mutual establishment of relation because the “I” cannot be an “I” without a thou and vice versa.

In this case, the mode of reflection or the activity of reflective thinking dwelling at the level of abstraction is of itself inadequate when it comes to constituting an experience. It is merely confined in the process of turning toward a previously performed act in order to grasp and comprehend more fully its objective content, character, course, or structure. Thus reflective "thought" becomes an essential tool in the development of understanding the ego and its objects however; its viability is bound by epistemological boundaries.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, the reflexive turn of consciousness occurs in the ontological domain involving a subject-object correlation.

While having the experience of his own ego also has the experience of himself as the subject. It is thus that the ego is the real subject having the experience of its subjectiveness or, in other words, constituting itself in consciousness. Hence not only am I conscious of my ego (on the ground of self-knowledge) but owing to my consciousness in its reflexive function I also experience my ego, I have the experience of myself as the concrete subject of the ego's very subjectiveness. Consciousness is not just an aspect but also an essential dimension or an actual moment of the reality of the being that I am, since it constitutes its subjectiveness in the experiential sense.<sup>29</sup>

Reflection provides a possible rational understanding in our attempt to articulate our theological distinctives and make them relevant to the present generation. Such kind of thinking consists of objectively analyzing the aggregate of abstract data in terms of how they fit into a larger scheme of things. Thus, reflective thought basically assists us in the area of comprehending experiences epistemologically and scientifically. On the other hand, reflexive mode of consciousness shapes the being while engaging itself in ethical interaction with the ‘other’ in creative fidelity, unconditional love, and I-thou movement of presence. Therefore, it functions beyond the parameters of conceptual elucidation toward the formative-transformative experience when it comes to constituting ontologically the self in consciousness.

### ***Aletheia* Realized in Self-Transcendence and Openness**

One of the most favorite nomenclatures in Greek philosophy is *aletheia*, a verb form of its English counterpart for ‘truth’ which means the unfolding continuum of the ever increasing splendor of interrelationship among entities. Truth in the lifeworld is not cognizable but encountered. As the existing subject projects itself in being, in turn, the revelation of such being grows richer in the course of communion. Revelation is not intended to impart some propositions but the acceptance of indwelling presence. Christ succinctly declares “I am the Truth. Thus, the truth is not knowledge about something but the person himself. When you put more premium on the mechanics of exposition in order to handle proficiently the propositional truth then you prefer to be a theologian than a saint. We do not skillfully master the text but we allow the incarnate living Word to master us. The Old Testament God referring to Himself “I am that I am” reveals a person and the omnipresence of a person to us. *Aletheia* is the discovery of the truth regarding our being. The discovery about oneself is the highest form of wisdom. In fact, Socrates said “the unexamined life is not worth living.”

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

Nobody genuinely grows in isolation because the governing principle of living is always *esse est coesse*, 'to be is to be with.' It is by our willingness to open ourselves up for interpenetration that enables us to realize the unfolding truth of being. "Without openness there can be no acceptance or bestowing, nothing new resulting from the meeting of two presences communicating with each other. Being-in-openness is being in freedom, being capable of that love that transfigures the whole universe."<sup>30</sup> Thus, you cannot recognize the gift of the other by not primarily being a gift. Being as gift implies utter responsibility for what the gift will turn out to be. If such be the case, giving to and responding with the gift is an act of faith, an absolute trust. The gift of presence also involves some risks. "Being-in-transcendence means that a being effectively goes out of itself, enters into communion with another, creating a history together, establishing bonds of interdependence."<sup>31</sup> Self-transcendence signifies an ontological mode of human spirit having outward oriented direction to make the self vulnerable for co-penetration as well as to seek rest in an Absolute. At this juncture, the notion of presence refers to one's openness to ontological convergences whose foundation of interconnectedness is the Eternal Thou as an encompassing presence.

A deep rooted inner urge or demand for transcendence reflects what true exigence for being is, that naturally springs from the social-moral nature of the imago Dei. Such ontological exigence involves a certain kind of metaphysical anxiety and dissatisfaction with the present self, enduring a radical deviation from its primordial design. Today's functionalized existence reduces an individual to a certain state of systemic depersonalization through the social roles they perform in some larger organization. Technocracy and highly institutionalized structures circumscribe people's freedom and creativity to transcend their situations. Think, for example, of a person on an assembly line repeating the same minimal activity hour after hour, a clerk in a highly technological department who enters data into a computer all day,<sup>32</sup> or the hypermarket sales people who mechanically utter a scripted expression, "happy to serve," devoid of personal touch. Undermining the freedom "to be" renders a milieu of emptiness, self-deception, and psychological dissonance that brings the inner demand for being.

"The true exigence for transcendence, is a person who yearns for an inner transformation, for example, to be more creative or more holy."<sup>33</sup> The radical change in the very mode of experience is described as *metanoia*, the complete turning of mind, heart and spirit. It is a response to one's vocation that is, creating oneself beyond what he/she is at present. For instance, The inner transformation of a husband who radically changes his attitude toward his wife from considering her only as someone who serves him to seeing her as someone who exists in her own right with intrinsic value.<sup>34</sup> The exigency for transcendence is an aspiration for an increasingly purer mode of experience that is open, receptive, and free from prejudices, and at

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<sup>30</sup> Boff, *Trinity*, 130.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, *Commentary*, 120; Marcel, *Mystery I*, 42; Marcel, *Mystery II*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

the same time linked with the plenitude of intelligible essences or the understanding of eternal truth and relations.<sup>35</sup>

The introspective questions, “What I am?” “What I am worth?” becomes a “supra empirical appeal” “beyond the limits of experience” towards our last supreme resource, one who can be described as an absolute Thou, a transcendent reality of “infinite plenitude”<sup>36</sup> and yet a person intimately related to me. “An absolute Thou would know and love me profoundly because it would never be external to me but deep within me.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, the appropriate consummation of that relationship with such a being takes place in participation to the reality which is not in a way external to what I am. Thus only an absolute Thou who knows me and evaluates me from deep within myself could reveal to me what I am truly worth.<sup>38</sup> Supra empirical phenomenon as used in this context acknowledges the absolute Thou beyond the measure of sensible verification for such a being would not be an objective datum. Albeit an absolute being cannot be confined within the experimental methods of scientific investigation through the senses unaided or expanded by instruments to prove hypothetical details, such reality can be encountered in some other kind of experiences.

Another factor hampering the effluence of ontological exigence is the predisposition of indisponibilit e.<sup>39</sup> We herein usually prefer the viable equivalent term ‘unavailability’ to designate concepts like self-centeredness, indifference, insensitivity, and so forth. It can be conceived as a chain that holds us back as well as ties us up to ourselves. It coincides to the ideas of solipsism and nihilism which connote the attitude of closure with regard to the exclusive creation of meanings. Self-centered individuals do not sympathetically and imaginatively share in the experiences of others and so deprive themselves of participating in all that is alive in them. Such people are unavailable, unable to respond to the many calls made upon them, calls, apparently, to open themselves and participate in the richness of realities beyond themselves. “The self-centered person remains incapable of responding to calls made upon him by life. He remains shut up in himself, in the petty circle of his private experience, which forms a kind of hard shell round him that he is incapable of breaking through.”<sup>40</sup>

Unavailability is to look upon another with attitudes of alieantion. One is not at the disposal of others, or unavailable to experience presence, the individual so detached is both enclosed within himself and unable to free himself from the consequence of his

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.

<sup>36</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. R. Rostal (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 37. Originally published as *Du refus a l'invocation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940). It is now published in French as *Essai de philosophie concrete* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

<sup>37</sup> Marcel, *Being*, 124-25.

<sup>38</sup> Marcel, *Creative*, 144-145.

<sup>39</sup> Marcel mentions the difficulties in translating into English the French terms *disponibilit e* and *indisponibilit e*. It has been suggested that the closely associated terms are availability and unavailability. They are the key concepts found in Marcel’s philosophy of participation.

<sup>40</sup> Manimala, *Being*, 155.

withdrawal. To be unavailable is to be in some way not only occupied but encumbered with one self. He remains shut up in the small circle of his private experience and judges others only by way they fit into his preconceived desires and plans. He seems incapable of laying himself open to a quality or virtue which belongs completely to another person and in the formation of which he himself has played no part. In turning towards myself and refusing to make myself accessible to others and to being, I, an indisponible, tend to make myself unavailable insofar as I treat my life or my being as a possession which is in some way a measurable quantity, liable, by that very fact, to dilapidation, exhaustion or even evaporation. The result of such unavailability is despair.<sup>41</sup>

Indisponible person in the ordinary language is a “selfish one” living in estrangement and the disponible person is a “liberated one” whose character manifests purity of motivation. From a perspective of withdrawn attitude the ‘other’ is treated as menacing threat instead of a loving presence, co-present Thou. The ‘I’ is never viewed in total preoccupation with its immediacies and concerns but enters into a meaningful dialogue of gracious exchanges with the thou. There is now a mutual awareness of persons who are not merely bound by institutional manuals and accessed according to their credentials for utilitarian purposes but by their being centers of conscious, responsible, and responsive participation.<sup>42</sup>

A more positive virtue to achieve mutual enrichment is found in the qualities of disponibilitate or availability, the opening up of self toward reaching endless possibility, moral harmony, and ontological maturity in different levels. Specifically, it refers to a human attitude of laying oneself open to the impact of Being and allowing the other presence to permeate himself or herself. Whereas, the unavailable person’s existence is inauthentic, meaningless, and incapable of spiritually progressing.<sup>43</sup> The disponible person liberates himself from all a priori categories and culturally conditioned biases into which other persons must fit. The agent has developed capacity to internalize and respond to the appeal made by others. Such openness does warrant desirable assurance but confronting the consequence accompanying the risk must never be allowed somehow to prevent that commitment. Disponibility perpetually resists the internal impulses as well as the influential pressure posed by the “collective” to embrace the status of a self-sufficient monad.<sup>44</sup> Through availability the agent’s free selfless act of self-donation may transform the other to become a personal thou in the response of acceptance. “The act of disponibility, of making myself available, by which I open myself to the personal reality of

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<sup>41</sup> Manimala, *Being*, 158-159; The principle that is operative here is: “He who tries to save his life will lose it; he who loses his life will save it.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

another is a free act; it cannot be demanded.”<sup>45</sup> Disponibility should be experienced by everyone as a necessity in life; it should become a life-blood of human existence.

The inner urge for transcendence accommodates disponibilitate as controlling disposition to necessarily achieve Being as fullness or plenitude. Our quest for authentic existence entails the establishment of and conscious participation in an intersubjective community of lovers who experience their common bond in pursuing noble virtues that convey meaning to human life.<sup>46</sup>

Beauty was not fullness of artistry or perfection of lines. It was fullness of being and perfection of presence. In many Mediterranean cultures, beauty is more than an intellectual aesthetic. It is an aesthetic of experience, participation, images, and communal celebration. The French scholar Pierre Babin<sup>47</sup> tells of seeing a number of Corsican elders sitting motionless under a tree, staring at the picturesque mountain range. He spoke to the villagers “of the beauty of the landscape.” They responded: “we feel good here.” Babin, unsure whether they understood him properly, tried again: “Your village is beautiful!” Once more they replied: “Do you feel good in our village?”

“An intersubjective union is not static but a living community of persons united in a vital, creative, fructifying milieu. Nor is it an empty universal genus but a type of unity which holds together a number of persons within a life which they share.”<sup>48</sup> Plenitude of being indicates an intersubjective movement of presences, animated by love, truth, and other human values, which essentially constitute an organism.<sup>49</sup> Holiness as renewal in the imago Dei means ‘authentic being,’<sup>50</sup> experiencing the fullness of being. Holy living, then, is truth unfolding in the milieu of intersubjective participation of disponible persons who by performing self-transcendence are willing to experience the impact of being and respond to the appeal of the other within a community of loving presences.

### **Logotheandric Witness as Incarnate Christlike Presence**

Christianity is by no means identical with some ideological restatements of particular religious tenets in the form of legitimized metanarratives and metaphysical propositions but

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<sup>45</sup> Clyde Pax, *Existential approach to God: A Study of Gabriel Marcel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 111-112.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, *Commentary*, 121.

<sup>47</sup> Pierre Babin and Mercedes Iannone, *The New Era in Religious Communication* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 111.

<sup>48</sup> Marcel, *Creative*, 35; see also Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator*, trans. E. Cruaford (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 155.

<sup>49</sup> Marcel, *Mystery II*, 183.

<sup>50</sup> That plenitude Marcel calls “being par excellence” at the end of the chapter (Marcel, *Mystery II*, 51) and in *Tragic Wisdom*...says it “is most genuinely being.” Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*. Translated by Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick, Publication of the Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, ed. John Wild (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 53.

essentially a life-changing discipleship process. “Confession of faith” *per se* constitutes performative statements rather than descriptive ones tantamount to the words “ I do” uttered respectively by the bride and groom in a wedding ceremony. Marriage vows are not research conclusions reached on the subject through series of austere observation and deliberate discourse but an actual personal engagement in the act itself. Thus, the message is not merely encoded in the expressed statement but it is indeed the person himself/herself. Jesus Christ declares “I am the Truth.”<sup>51</sup> The gospel to be existentially authentic ought to be a “mode of being” effectively engaged in interpersonal communion with other selves; in this manner, each redeemed personality as a bearer of divine grace and unconditional love dynamically represent such divine likeness to fulfill the Christlike *telos*. God as the supreme influential agent calls us to share in the holy life and its ethical dimensions of acting and being acted upon by virtue of Christ’s exemplary life. Being so, “we can and may share in and emulate the perfect immanent power of becoming and perfect transitive power of influence.”<sup>52</sup> Sanctified life encompasses the incarnate state of a transformed being, the synergy of gracious influence within the scope of interrelationship, and the ethically responsible reflection of *imago Dei* to the present age.

At this juncture, from the socio-ethical perspective, living a holy life means practicing mutually Christ’s incarnate presence as *logotheandric* witness. “*Logotheandric*,” bearing a unique symmetry to form an operational nomenclature which etymologically derived from *logos* (word), *theos* (God), and *andros* (man), presupposes a certain conceptual compatibility to the oriental holistic mode of thinking. Analytic rationality manifests utter inability when dealing with a profound understanding of spiritual experience, state of being, and the motive undergirding an act. Why so, because truth in Christianity does not dwell on the epistemological domain but it is in its essence an ontological encounter. The word *theandric* obtained a historic reputation in Western thought which has been always referred to as the union of the human and the divine without confusion. It is analogous to the incarnation of Jesus Christ who has both divine and human natures. In Christian theology it can be called “the incarnational model.”

On the other hand, *logos* is a Greek word that comes from the verb meaning “to say” or “to speak.” No single English equivalent quite captures its richness so it is best in many cases to leave the term untranslated. In the classical period, Heraclitus’ philosophy revolving around the concept of the *logos* seems to have provided explanations that the paradoxical world and its phenomenal flux exemplify a rational order. The frequently common concepts associated with this rational order are “word,” “reason,” “wisdom.” Thus, its basic meanings entail the world-life-view of hypostatizing divine qualities in terms of the creating-recreating agent of all that there is, the integrating principle of existence, and the sustaining force of life. Now we are illumined a little bit on the relevance why St. John’s gospel conveyed the most comprehensive

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<sup>51</sup> John 14:6.

<sup>52</sup>William L. Power, “*Imago Dei- Imittio Dei*,” *International Journal For Philosophy of Religion* 42 (1997): 140.

Christological account on the logos. “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”<sup>53</sup> Christ is the personification of God’s wisdom and without Him humanity will never experience ontological significance, life’s meaning, authentic intersubjective relations, transformed self, and eternal validity. Christ has restored the meaningless and corrupted image during the Adamic fall, and reunited us to him after we had been made partakers of the benefits of His atoning sacrifices, by participating in His grace and imitating His life.<sup>54</sup> Human faculties, then, specifically free will, ostensibly embodied the divine prevenient grace that enables us to make moral decisions toward the harmony of our profound exigence for being and the revealed living incarnate Word, the perfect Image of the Father in the context of community life.

Albeit the expression “logotheandric” seems to aesthetically fashion a euphonic language, it bears the essence of what it means to live and grow in Christlikeness. By embracing the “Personal Truth” and taking the resolute responsibility of representing all the redemptive and sanctifying attributes revealed in Christ, who is the perfect image of the Father, we become *logos Christos/theos*, incarnate presence of the “Living Word” to both the world and the community of faith. If such be the case, holiness means “Word conformed.” We are living according to the written word, the Bible, as well as to the Incarnate Personal Word, Jesus Christ. In other words, logotheandric witness is another nomenclature for Christlikeness in interpersonal dimension or the incarnational principle of Christlike lifestyle. Logotheandric witness as incarnate Christlike presence is tantamount to a concrete representation of Christ to others fulfilling both the redemptive value of the gospel and the edifying potential of *theos corpus*. Thus, it implies a “sacramental presence” actualizing agape through intersubjective communion. “This work of sanctification finds its principal source in the grace of Christ, who is both Son of God, perfect Image of the Father, and Son of Mary, truly human like us. But this grace requires human collaboration, above all through faith, hope and love.”<sup>55</sup> The communion of the saints could be possibly realized within the nexus of hypostatic union, *Deus homo factus est* (God has become man). God-Man participates in our nature so we can participate in the divine nature. Hence, we

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<sup>53</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>54</sup> Leo The Great, *Sermons*, introduction by Jacques Leclercq, Trans. Rene Dolle, Sources Chretiennes, vol 22 (Paris: Cerf, 1949), 44. Here the classical theological anthropology distinguishes four stages in the evolution of the image: formation through creation, deformation by Adam’s sin, reformation by Christ, and conformation through imitation of Christ and the Father. Paul says in Colossians 3: 10: “ You have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator... Christ is all, and in all.”

The famous prologue of the *prima secundae* is not simply a threshold. It shows God laying a foundation, free will, which will support all that follows: morality viewed as man’s return to God. Nor we forget that finally, in the *tertia pars*, St. Thomas will study Christ who, in his humanity, is the necessary way to God, while in His divine personality Christ is the Word of God, the perfect Image of the father. For a lengthy discussion see Pinckaers, *Reader*, 132-133.

<sup>55</sup> Pinckaers *Reader*, 135.

participate in one another's life in a common way. Sharing the totally redeemed nature in the same life of the God-Man resonates through the common spiritual DNA in each Christian self. "Since 'hypostasis' is identical with personhood and not with substance, it is not in its 'self-existence' but in communion that this being is itself and thus is at all. Thus communion does not threaten personal particularity, it is constitutive of it."<sup>56</sup>

Mutually practicing the Christlike presence in intersubjectivity requires an in-depth understanding of what the nature of the "subject" is in relation to the process of growth in sanctification. Marcel explains, in "The Ego and Its Relations to Others," that by the term "ego" he does not mean an isolated entity with precise boundaries but a part of myself which I focus on and present to others for their recognition and approval.<sup>57</sup> We cannot give something that we do not possess. Something is owned before it can be a gift to others, myself likewise. However, since the ego is exposed and vulnerable, the subject exhibits natural proclivity to safeguard it from all external threats, especially from being ignored or slighted by others. Marcel claims that concentrating on one's ego is idolatry of oneself because it becomes the privileged center of one's microcosm to juxtapose others as rival to be overcome or as mirrors to favorably affirm oneself. He offers the example of a shy young man at the party who is extremely self-conscious because he knows no one and feels himself at the mercy of the gaze of others. Such self-centeredness, which views others as objects which threaten one's ego, is the opposite of an intersubjective (subject-subject, not subject to object) relation with others.<sup>58</sup> Subject is a permanent, non-contingent dimension of a unique self. Marcel refers to it as the self insofar as it remains to be the well spring of inner life and conscious acts (knowing, willing, desiring, wondering, and so forth) and thereby ultimately concerns itself with the questions of being, doing and knowing.<sup>59</sup>

Intersubjective communion, then, is a relation of subjects or selves who to some degree recognize each other as unique, free, self-conscious beings who possess intrinsic value and who are, or should be, in charge of the sense and direction of their lives. Furthermore, intersubjectivity constitutes a mutual enrichment of selves by influencing each other in the subject-I-subject-thou convergence. Objects can be beside but never really with each other, since intersubjective relation signifies a bond between subjects that unite them together at the ontological level, that is qua beings, so that they negate themselves as isolated individuals. Such union is internally making a difference to participating distinct subjects since the other person is "not a threat or obstacle but supportive of me, I am able to relax my egocentric concentration on

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<sup>56</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, contemporary Greek Theologians 4 (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 409.

<sup>57</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator*, trans. E. Crauford (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 14-20.

<sup>58</sup> Marcel, *Mystery I*, 176-77; Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 19-20.

<sup>59</sup> Marcel, *Mystery II*, 25, 55-57.

myself and become open and available to the calls, explicit, of many others.”<sup>60</sup> Against Descartes’ initial metaphysical assertion of self-existence (*cogito ergo sum*), which is a kind of metaphysical isolation, Marcel would affirm, ‘we are.’ Subjects joined together in intersubjective relations do not fuse into one and the same being, nor on the other hand do they remain totally separate to each other as two nuclei quite distinct from each other. They are truly united in an “suprapersonal unity,” yet the integrity of each person is not obliterated in their unity but enhanced, for their relationship is fructifying and a vital milieu from which each subject draws its strength.<sup>61</sup> “Being itself is experienced as intersubjectivity, it is the “cornerstone of ontology,”<sup>62</sup> thus, *esse est co esse*, to be is to be with. Marcel considers the domain of grace as the domain of intersubjectivity.

Engaging in an open personal dialogue subsequent to an attitude of disponibilit  allows the primordial state of conscious self as relational ego to take its own course without a loss of being. In the self-donation, participation, and commitment of I and Thou there arises a community, the fullness of presence one exercises and the duty and vocation of us all. Intersubjectivity is a willful participation in and engagement of spontaneous familial intimacy which fosters a kind of fertile indistinction of person beyond the human collectivity of the technocratic world.<sup>63</sup> Being-us, the actual community, is the product of the dynamic communing as a mode of being by which we constitute a single unified whole. “The “I” never exists on its own; it is dwelt in by many, since its roots spread out into others, as it is permeated by others. Beings in communion live in a permanent state of excentricity, since their center is called by another center outside them in order jointly to form a community.”<sup>64</sup>

Theologically, God, as absolute openness, supreme presence, total immediacy, eternal transcendence, and infinite communion, establishes a viable conceptual structure for the ethical movement of finite I-thou relations. The different images of ecclesia expressed by the figure of the covenant involve the notions of God’s special people under the internal motivation of grace to form a messianic community that God desires.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the Holy Christian God renders a heuristic paradigm that best represents the Trinitarian formula such as the three persons, a single communion and a single Trinitarian community. No divine Person exists alone for its own sake; they are always and eternally in relationship with one another. God’s communion supersedes mere socio-political expressions because it seeks above all the intimacy and freedom of the human heart.<sup>66</sup> So then, if social holiness practically accommodates such theocentric trajectory, we should no longer consider God as the highest priority but precisely “He is our all.” “For in

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<sup>60</sup> Marcel, *Mystery I*, 177-81.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 182; Marcel, *Fidelity*, 35.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>63</sup> Manimala, *Being*, 173.

<sup>64</sup> Boff, *Trinity*, 131

<sup>65</sup> Ezekiel 31:33; 37:26; Hebrews. 10:16.

<sup>66</sup> Boff, *Trinity*, 132-133.

Him we live and move and have our being.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, holiness simply means “God is my all.” It is our commitment to live out the intersubjective attributes of our God as we stay true to our own nature as created in the imago Dei.

Practicing the incarnate presence of God in the world and faith-community behooves our determination to produce creative impact upon life as we all journey together in Christlikeness. Functionalized existence in a technocratic milieu treats everyone else objectively as docile mechanism to achieve whatever desired outcome. However, if the other is a presence, one ceases to be a case, since it includes the notion of depth and the supratemporal or eternal dimension of the self that transcends a particular moment of time. Presence signifies a union of the subjects in mutual participation internally affecting each other significantly to achieve the goal of living up to their ideal self or vocation. Experiencing someone as presence can refresh my inner being as well as strengthen my resolve and “it makes me more fully myself than I would be if I were not exposed to its impact.”<sup>68</sup> The physical proximity of a person to us does not warrant being much more present than a loved one thousands of miles away who is continually in our thoughts and affections since the undergirding qualification here is always grounded in an existing established communion. Experiencing rose as a presence radically differs from subjecting it as an object of scientific investigation or practically using its substance for economic purposes. Poetic descriptions would somehow enhance my openness and receptivity to the essence of the flower itself and thereby appreciate and welcome the impact of its beauty. In that case, the rose ceases to be an object but now a part of my very being. In other words, the rose is a presence in which I participate and because a particular union exists between us, it affects me internally in terms of enjoying its refreshing beauty or a change of my perspective about the intrinsic value of the created order.<sup>69</sup>

Another concrete example of presence that Marcel does discuss in some details is illness. An objective analysis of illness would depict it externally as the breakdown of an apparatus, the malfunctioning of an organism. Considering illness as a presence engenders internal effects to the being of the person who suffers such physical disability who has to choose his/her attitude toward it. In other words, the sick person must decide how to live with it or what course of action that would be most appropriate in dealing with it. Will he give up, use his illness as a reason to rebel against God or fate, use it to gain pity from others, or see it as a battle to be fought or as an ordeal which provides him an opportunity to grow in patience, courage, and faith? Upon recognizing my illness as a presence, it becomes now a part of me and it is something in which I participate thus it is no longer a maladjusted physical tragedy. Likewise, to perceive another’s illness as a presence, I consider the person not primarily a malfunctioning organism but as an ill neighbor who calls me to be compassionate and helpful; in other words,

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<sup>67</sup> Acts 17:28.

<sup>68</sup> Marcel, *Mystery I*, 205.

<sup>69</sup> Anderson, *Commentary*, 93.

who calls me to be an intersubjective union of love with him.<sup>70</sup> Holiness is a “lifestyle of presencing” in order to carry out our mission to be the salt and light of the world and spiritually gifted member constituting an organism. Indeed, Christ’s incarnate presence indicates the noble function of the renewed *imago Dei* which is at work in the world as well as in the body of Christ, that is, logotheandric witness.

## Conclusion

Inasmuch as “being itself” is experienced as intersubjectivity, i.e., *esse est co esse*, to be is to be with; holiness as a state of being is essentially a dynamic growing relationship of transformed selves who are mutually committed to participate in each other’s spiritual journey and life toward Christlikeness. Indeed, the communion of presence, which internally affects each other significantly in the bond of divine love and fidelity, creates their ideal selves in response to an invocation emanating from the I-thou relationship. Fidelity, as an active perpetuation of presence, always signifies an unconditional vow to another person, participating in the highest fulfillment of other’s being in *agape*.

Ontological exigence unveils the depths of one’s own life in a form of inner demand. It culminates in the act of self-dedication, availability, and self-sacrifice to gain the consciousness of our eternal telos toward the leap of faith. Thus, holiness as renewal in the *imago Dei* entails “authentic being,” experiencing the fullness of being. Since the residency of grace in human faculties render us capable of knowing and loving God, achieving spiritual maturity becomes an ethical responsibility apart from isolation. We are called to open up ourselves to the impact of being and allow the other presence to permeate us so that the self can obtain endless possibility of development and harmony in different levels.

Logotheandric witness is a holiness lifestyle of mutually practicing Christlikeness as sacramental presence to edify each other within the faith-community and to reflect the redemptive character of the gospel outside the church. Our ethical interaction ought to effectively represent the life of Christ to the world as well as to the ecclesiastical body. In the final analysis, the Christian message is performative statement reflected by our very being and in so doing, we become the incarnate *logos theo*.

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<sup>70</sup> Marcel, *Mystery I*, 209-11