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Abbreviations

ALC	The American Lutheran Church
BC	<i>The Book of Concord</i> . Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959.
ECRP	The Evangelical Church of the River Plate
ELCA	The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
LSPS	The Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest
LSTC	The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i> . American Edition. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Eric W. Gritsch. 55 volumes. St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press, 1955-75.
LWF	The Lutheran World Federation
MACC	Mexican American Cultural Center
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PCPCU	Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Church Unity
ThStKr	<i>Theologische Studien und Kritiken</i>
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . Weimar.
W & W	<i>Word & World</i>

ABSTRACT

This dissertation began as a personal journey. I have long been troubled by the way that the church and secular society have both ostracized the Hispanic/Latino/a community, so I have sought to investigate the following perplexing questions: Why has the church and the society treated as suspect and marginalized those who are different from the dominant culture and what is the Lutheran theological and confessional response to this injustice in human relations? As a member of this marginal group, I have often experienced this marginalization and theological dissonance both within the church and outside the church. Folks who are considered foreigners in this country because of their ethnic heritage or native language often experience the violation of their human dignity that is grounded in their creation as *imago Dei*. This experience is particularly acute in the Southwest where the border with Mexico is so fluid and where native peoples are often considered foreigners.

The borderlands of the Southwest have been called “nepantla” or “the land in the middle.” I was born to Mexican immigrants in this middle place. I grew up in the Lutheran faith and tradition in the crossroads of two countries with a history of violent conquest and domination. This is a place where many new immigrants and native citizens sojourn in faith. Pervasive violence to human dignity thrives in this middle zone where the religious and secular spheres often violate our creation in the image of God. This state of affairs led me to investigate the theological and confessional traditions for a perspective that would speak to this

experience. This research made evident the need for a constructive theology to capture the experience and living faith of the people in affirmation of their human dignity. The dominant religious traditions had excluded the voices of Hispanic and Latino/a Christians. Popular religion, examined in chapter Two, became the vehicle and venue for the investigation of their self-understanding and confession as a people who experience justification by faith and affirmation in the goodness of the creation. This research led me to formulate an ethic of human dignity grounded in the image of God. I call this ethic a new logic that compels the church to understand more thoroughly what the Creator of all humanity expects and intends for the affirmation of the human dignity of all people in the mission and ministry of the church.

Chapter One of the dissertation introduces the topic and provides a survey and critical examination of the dogmatic tradition of the concept of the *imago Dei* from the time of the early Christian church to the present. This survey establishes the theological framework for the development of the concept of human dignity as inherent in the *Imago Dei*. Previous dissertations on the subject had excluded the voice of the Hispanic/Latino/a community, and so critical examination became necessary. I cited the work of James Childs as an example, because his work was quintessentially a perspective of the dominant culture. This chapter notes how Christian tradition has historically defined and construed the *imago Dei* to the benefit of certain groups and to the exclusion and marginalization of others. The voice of women in general and Latina women in

particular can operate as a corrective to this historical legacy. My method in this chapter was analytical, exegetical, and experiential in order to develop an inclusive and constructive proposal that would take into account the self-descriptive ontology and existential experience of the Hispanic/Latino/a community. The exegetical work of Claus Westermann on the Genesis accounts of creation confirmed one of the major tenets of this thesis: that language is a gift of creation, intrinsic to the *imago Dei* and determinative of a people's self-understanding. This thesis set the stage for my own arguments and my analysis of the work of Hispanic/Latino/a theologians and ethicists.

Chapter Two examines the theory and practice of popular religion as a locus of epistemology. My purpose in examining the role of popular religious practices within the Lutheran Hispanic/Latino/a experience was threefold. I examined how the process of faith transmission and appropriation of religious ideas is characteristic of the process of transmission of religious ideas that occurred during the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Second, I discerned the value and significance of the role of popular religion in the faith formation and transmission of religious ideas within the Hispanic/Latino/a Lutheran community. Third, I showed how this faith appropriation and expression in its various popular forms, rituals, and symbols has affirmed the faith, cultural identity, and religious expression of the Hispanic/Latino/a community. The Hispanic/Latino/a community appropriates its identity as *imago Dei* in the dialectic of sacred encounter through the use of language, liturgical symbols, and

popular religious practices. This review laid the foundation for empirical research of the popular religious practices of four Lutheran Hispanic/Latino/a congregations in Texas in detail in chapter Three.

Chapter Three shows the historical denial and denigration of the human dignity of the Hispanic/Latino/a community. In the sixteenth century, Spanish theologians questioned the humanity of the native peoples, reflecting the Aristotelian precept of the *logos* and the theory of natural slavery that arose from this *mis-understanding*. As a review of historical and theological arguments revealed, a false assessment of Native American ontology sanctioned this violation of human dignity. This chapter disclosed how people of faith from the beginning of the conquest defended the humanity of native peoples and how Hispanic/Latino/a theologians continue to affirm this humanity. I was able to retrieve historical and theological arguments that affirm the human dignity of the marginal community. The Old World European prejudice influenced and shaped the history of racism and ethnocentrism of the Americas, but this contemporary defense and retrieval offer counter-traditions that argue against this dominant prejudice. I showed that European anthropology and theology at the time of the conquest reinforced the view of the human as a rational being, to the benefit of the European but to the detriment of native peoples and their self-understanding. This perspective of dominance later influenced the ideology of Manifest Destiny that justified the conquest of the native peoples of the Southwest. The resulting loss and degradation of human dignity continues to plague human relations in

both the church and secular society. Ideological forces forged during the conquest continue to perpetuate the myth that interprets native peoples and foreigners as a suspect human species. These mis-conceptions imply that human dignity is intrinsic to some but not all people. They reinforce the denial of the human dignity of anyone whom the dominant culture considers as foreign, specifically non-European immigrants in the United States. I consulted the works of various Hispanic/Latino/a theologians, historians, and anthropologists who have offered new constructs and ethical proposals for the restoration and affirmation of our human dignity as intrinsic to our ontology and our self-understanding as *imago Dei*.

Chapter Four examines the doctrine of justification by faith as the principle doctrine that grants identity within the Lutheran confessional heritage. I argue that a more inclusive and faithful exposition of this doctrine requires the perspective and experience of the Lutheran Hispanic/Latina community, as expressed through the venue and vehicle of popular religious practices. I further argue that popular religious expression serves as a primary source for the confession of faith of the community. The confession of the justified believer is implicit or made explicit through the popular ritual forms, practices, and symbols of the faith that serve as vehicles for cultural and confessional identity. I point out that the Hispanic/Latino/a Protestant community expresses its own understanding and appropriation of the doctrine of justification by faith in the

context of exclusion and marginality. Confessing the faith in this context gives rise to notions of resistance to injustice that are confessed and expressed through the medium of popular religious practices.

In Chapter Four I also examined the popular religious practices of four Lutheran Hispanic/Latino/a congregations in Texas, and in this way attempted to discern how these practices operate. I argue that popular religious practices of Hispanic Lutheran congregations present a subversive affirmation of the *imago Dei*; that is, these practices affirm the human dignity and cultural identity of the Hispanic/Latino/a community in light of the historical marginalization that resulted from the conquest of the Southwest with its correlative ideological effect of negation of cultural and human worth. To crystallize the issues, I consulted the work of Orlando Espín, Virgilio Elizondo, Justo González, Paul Barton, and various other Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians, historians, social scientists, and cultural anthropologists.

Chapter Five concludes the dissertation by examining the ethical implications for mission and ministry that arose from the faith experience of the marginal community of the Southwest. The works of two major Hispanic/Latina ethicists – Ismael García and Ada María Isasi-Díaz – helped to clarify the ethical self-understanding and expectations of the community. The work of historian Juan González assisted in placing this self-understanding and expectations within the historical context of the Southwest. This chapter lifts up the struggle for justice and defense of cultural identity that has been the historical legacy of

the Hispanic/Latina community. It also proposes a new logic that affirms the cultural and theological identity of the community as an expression of the *imago Dei* that is affirmed in the life and praxis of the Christ of faith. This new logic affirms the dignity of all people. It retrieves the original blessing and intent of the Creator – that all people should bear the mark of the *imago Dei* in the expression of their human dignity. If this project has furthered that blessing and intent, then may it serve as a witness to the Glory of God!

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Hispanics confess that our humanity is grounded in our being created in God's image.¹

This quotation by the Protestant theologian Ismael García reflects the history, experience, and confession of the Hispanic/Latina² community of the United States and its territories. This confessional response comes from an immigrant community that has experienced a history of marginalization, exclusion, and indignity due to their cultural, linguistic, and religious roots and affiliations. Social forces have relegated Hispanic/Latina people to the underside of history by viewing and characterizing them as less than human. This

¹ Ismael García, *Dignidad: Ethics Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 130.

² The terms *Hispanic* and *Latino/a* are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. These terms are intended to be inclusive of the female gender and are used herein for simplicity of expression. It is recognized that there is a divergence of opinion regarding the interpretation and appropriation of the terms by the Hispanic/Latina community. The United States census bureau coined the term *Hispanic* in the effort to categorize the diverse Hispanic community under one heading. The term was intended to be descriptive of any person with a Spanish surname or a person who was from a Spanish-speaking country of origin. Members of the diverse Hispanic community appropriated the masculine and feminine gender terms *Latino* and *Latina*, respectively, in their effort to name themselves as a people whose history and roots are of Latin American origin. This conscious effort to be self-descriptive reflects the resistance and protest by the community to being named or categorized by a dominant cultural group or force such as the one exercised by the United States government. This type of resistance to being named by others has precedence in the biblical narrative wherein the liberating God of the Hebrews resists the attempt to be named, and thus controlled and characterized by others; the resulting epiphany is that *I AM WHO I AM* is revealed to Moses and the Hebrew people as the God who liberates the oppressed (Exodus 3:1-15). See also, Justo L. González, "What's in a Name," *Each in Our Own Tongue: A History of Hispanic United Methodism*, ed. Justo L. González (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 22-3; Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Naming Ourselves," *En la lucha: In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 2-4.

experience of indignity has been equally true in the church catholic³ when it lost sight of her historical roots and theological underpinnings.⁴ As a Latino Lutheran whose theological location is within the reformation movement of the church catholic, it is my intention to revisit the history of the theologoumenon of the *imago Dei* from the perspective of those theologians of the church who have interpreted the construct with an understanding that to be *created in the image and likeness of God* affirms the human worth and dignity of all people, in particular those on the margins of society.⁵

The Hispanic/Latina community consists of immigrants who are socially located on the margins of both the church and society. This community often experiences a trampled human dignity. This *place* is also my social location. As the son of Latino immigrants from México,⁶ I will revisit the history of the *imago*

³ Here I use the term "catholic" to mean "according to the whole." For a more elaborate examination of this point, see Justo L. González, *Out of Every Tribe and Nation: Christian Theology at the Ethnic Roundtable* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 18-27; idem, *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 16-21.

⁴ Protestant historian Justo González makes this point in speaking of the end of the Constantinian era in the church history (from the fourth through the twentieth centuries) when the church was allied with the existing order of society and profited from this association. He notes that a current of critical opposition has always existed within the church and is now producing the "Reformation of the Twentieth Century." See Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 9-74.

⁵ José David Rodríguez, Jr. speaks eloquently on the unique contribution that the Hispanic ecumenical community is making in the new reformation—or reformulation—of the ministry, mission, and theology of the church. This new reformation like the Reformation of the sixteenth century is leading to a revision of the church and its systems of doctrine. He claims that this critical examination of the religious tradition by the Hispanic community is a prophetic and faithful witness to the confessing nature of the faith. See José D. Rodríguez, Jr. "Confessing the Faith from a Hispanic Perspective," *Protestantes/Protestants: Hispanic Christianity Within Mainline Traditions*, ed. David Maldonado, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 107-22.

⁶ My parents became Lutherans as a result of missionary activity in south Texas during the early twentieth century. The Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest, Austin, Texas has documented this history in *The Roots and Dynamics of Lutheran Hispanic Ministry in Texas*, ed. T. Michael Mackey (LSPS, 1989).

Dei from the perspective of the marginal community and its theologians in order to assess the faithfulness of the Lutheran confessional heritage and its promise and challenge in affirming the human dignity of all people.

In order to do this I have selected three historical periods and select theologians beginning with the early church period, followed by the Medieval and then the Modern periods, for a review of the doctrine's reinterpretation from the initial focus on the high value and dignity of the human being. I do not intend this review of the *imago Dei* to explore the entire breath and scope of the doctrine; that would be too broad a goal and would defeat the purpose of focusing on that aspect of the doctrine that gives it what I maintain and argue is its vital center: the human dignity of the person regardless of creed, color, gender, history, or sexual orientation.

The Story of Human Being

Biblical scholars have extensively investigated the *imago Dei* and have documented their exegetical results.⁷ I intend to examine the *imago Dei*

⁷ See David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, rev. ed. (London: Collins, 1973), 17-52; Manuel Guerra, *Antropologías y teología: Antropologías helénico-bíblicas y su repercusión en la teología y espiritualidad cristianas* (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, S.A., 1976), 165-225; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 11-32; John F. O'Grady, *Christian Anthropology: A Meaning of Human Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 10-22; W. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985); W. Pannenberg, *Human Nature, Election, and History* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 13-27; W. Pannenberg, *What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); Xabier Piscaza, *Para comprender hombre y mujer en las religiones* (Navarra: Verbo Divino, 1996), 167-213, 275-303; Charles Sherlock, *Doctrine of Humanity* (England: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 27-72; K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 78-96; Ellis Z. Tiffany, *The Image of God in Creation: A Critical Examination of Ancient Hebrew Anthropology, Its Psychological and Soteriological Implications* (Ridgecrest: The Interforde Foundation, 1997); Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago

construct from a theological perspective, which requires a biblical foundation. Thus, I will refer primarily to the biblical scholarship of Claus Westermann and to the Lutheran theologian Philip Hefner.

The Sacred Scriptures of the Hebrew People

Westermann points out that the Christian story of the human being has an antecedent in the Hebrew canon.⁸ Both Jewish and Christian theology base their understanding of what it is to be human being on the affirmation that human beings are created in the image of God. This affirmation is from the Priestly tradition (commonly referred to as P) of the sixth-fifth century B.C.E. (commonly referred to as P) found in Genesis 1, a tradition that was forged during the Babylonian exile.⁹ For purposes of this dissertation, the relevant texts are:

Press, 1957); John Rodman Williams, Jr., "The Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Contemporary Theology" (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1954).

⁸ Claus Westermann, *Genesis*. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968). The English translation is *Genesis: A Practical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 10-11.

⁹ Ibid., 2. Westermann agrees with scholars in holding that Genesis 1-11 is a composite of two written works, J (the "Yahwist," tenth-ninth century, considered to be the writers of Genesis 2), and P (the "Priestly source," sixth-fifth century, considered to be the writers of Genesis 1). He notes that Hermann Gunkel and others first recognized that J and P are not authors in our sense of the word, but are primarily tradents who fashioned the traditional materials into a single work, a cohesive primal history. He adds that they worked not only as tradents, but as authors and theologians as well. According to Philip Hefner, this means they would have engaged in a process of reflection, writing down, editing, and creative rewriting of written and oral history. It is thus not insignificant that the P document emerged as Israel was trying to reestablish Jerusalem after its destruction and the exile in Babylon. The witness to creation in the P document may reflect the influence of the powerful creation theology of the Babylonians and Israel's incorporation of this creation mythology into its narrative. See Philip Hefner, "Fourth Locus, The Creation," *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ed. Carl Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 280-6. This reinterpretation of its self-understanding as a community that has experienced conquest and exile can be seen as a refutation of its denial of human dignity. To say that one has been created in the image of God is a strong rebuttal to a denigration of human dignity. This is similar to the experience of the Hispanic/Latina community that is reinterpreting its history and theology as a response to their conquest and the imposition of foreign value systems. For an excellent review of this history and the hermeneutic that recovers this sense of loss of dignity in the Hispanic/Latina community see Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (New York: Orbis, 1985). For the many voices within the Hispanic/Latina community that are contributing to this sense of recovery of human dignity, see Maldonado, ed., *Protestantes/Protestants*.

1:26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness ..."

1:27 So God created humankind in his [sic] image, in the image of God he [sic] created them; male and female he [sic] created them.
(NRSV)

Other related texts include the following:

5:1 ... When God created humankind, he [sic] made them in the likeness of God.

5:3 [Adam] became the father of a son in his [sic] likeness, according to his [sic] image ...

9:6 Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his [sic] own image God made humankind. (NRSV)

According to Westermann, the decision by God to make human beings reflects a special relationship to the Creator and a special command. God intends to create human beings "according to our image, like ourselves." The question of what that means has been asked repeatedly.¹⁰ It does not mean a particular human quality; it is not an isolated assertion about human beings, but rather concerns the purpose of their creation. For Westermann, the Creator wants to create a being analogous to the Creator, to whom the Creator can

¹⁰ Westermann lists the following groups of opinions in the history of interpretation: (1) those who distinguish between natural and supernatural likeness to God; (2) those who define the likeness in spiritual capacities or abilities; (3) those who interpret it as external form; (4) those who differ sharply with 3; (5) those who interpret the terms as denoting that the human being is God's counterpart, one who corresponds to God; (6) those who interpret the *imago* as the human's status as representative of God on earth. See Westermann, *Genesis*, vol. 1, *Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 205-14. The English translation is *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Augsburg: 1984), 148-61.

speak, and who will listen and speak to the Creator. He observes that this purpose "remains true despite all human differences; every person is created in the image of God" (emphasis mine).¹¹ Further, humanity is given a special task.¹² By virtue of being created, humanity bears a responsibility; "human dignity and responsibility are inseparable" (emphasis mine).¹³

Westermann identifies this special task or responsibility of the creature as the exercise of sovereignty over the rest of the creation. He bases his interpretation on his exegetical reading of Genesis 1:28, which follows immediately after the creation of the creature in the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:27. The text of Genesis 1:28 reads as follows:

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (NRSV)

He notes that this view of "subjugation" refers particularly to the rule of kings (e.g., 1 Kgs. 4:24; Ps. 110:2), but that according to the ancient view there was no suggestion of exploitation; rather, the king was personally "responsible for the

¹¹ Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 10. This is a significant observation in light of the experience of racial and sexual discrimination that has colored the history of this country and of the church community. For an excellent exposition of the Old Testament view of the image as universal, see Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, 17-31.

¹² Ada María Isasi-Díaz has identified this special task as the historical project of the *kin-dom* of God in which the *mujerista* (Latina women) community participates in its struggle for justice. See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha*, 34-54; Ismael García identifies it as the creative agency of the human being who is the image of God as a creative agent. This agency empowers the Hispanic/Latina community to pursue the vision or historical project of creating a more inclusive and compassionate community. See Ismael García, "A Theological-Ethical Analysis of Hispanic Struggles for Community Building in the United States," *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 289-306.

¹³ Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 10-11. Protestant ethicist Ismael García makes a cogent argument for the nexus between human dignity and responsibility in the ethics of

welfare and prosperity of his subjects."¹⁴ This he claims is what is meant by the rule of humanity over the rest of the creation. Humanity has a preeminent position in creation and exercises that role with a high sense of responsibility.¹⁵

In addition to its relationship to God and its purpose the human race is the creation of God as both male and female. There can be no human existence apart from this existence in two sexes; humans are communal creatures, and all human community is based on the community of male and female. God creates both male and female in the image of God as a special and unique creation with a high destiny.¹⁶ However, theologians have too frequently denied that women share the *imago Dei*, as I will discuss further in this chapter.¹⁷ In this way, the

care exercised by the Hispanic/Latina community. For García dignity is also a gift in the act of creation, relational in character and irrevocable. See García, *Dignidad*, 130-37.

¹⁴ By *ancient view* I interpret Westermann to mean the patriarchal exposition of the Old Testament canon. In light of the historical-critical method of interpretation, most modern scholars agree that the patriarchal interpretation of the scriptures reflects the particular cultural and gender bias of the biblical writers.

¹⁵ This position denotes a high view of humanity that is critiqued by Hispanic/Latina and feminist theologians who amplify the patriarchal and white male European views from the perspective of their own particular historical experience and interpretation of the text. According to the exegesis of Justo González, the Genesis text has often been interpreted as giving human beings *carte blanche* in their dealings with the earth often to a destructive end. He notes, "We are made of earth. That means that we do not stand over against nature but are rather part of it. We are not higher beings who can look down upon nature with utter detachment. When we look at nature, we look at ourselves, for we are part of it" (González, *Mañana*, 130-1). Dorothee Soelle points out that humanity has not always been a good steward of creation and that the unparalleled human exploitation of the environment diminishes the interdependency between humanity and the earth. See Dorothee Soelle and Shirley A. Cloyes, *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 1-34.

¹⁶ Philip Hefner has coined the phrase *created co-creator* to denote this sense of high destiny of the human being. See Hefner, "Fourth Locus," *Christian Dogmatics*, 323-8.

¹⁷ David Cairns points out that the image in the Old Testament teaching is universal; it belongs to the human race as such. Not only Hebrews, but Gentiles also are created in it, and not only man is in God's image, but woman also. See Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, 21.

church has often relegated women to a secondary role in human history. Until recently, the theological roundtable has excluded or silenced women's voices.¹⁸

For Westermann "*implicit in being created in the image of God is the capacity for language*" (emphasis mine).¹⁹ He also observes that the succession of human generations that P places after the creation story in Chapters 5 and 10 is a succession of names, and in the succession of names lies the beginning of history. History, he notes, grows out of the blessing conferred on the human family through fertility and procreation.

Westermann's observations resonate with the Hispanic/Latina perspective on the *imago Dei* for several reasons. First, language or the ability to speak and name the world is derivative of the *imago Dei* as a gift of God.²⁰ The language of the family of origin is a gift of a historical and theological world view.²¹ The gift of language also confers an identity that is nurtured and affirmed through the culture and history of the family and the community. It allows the beneficiaries of the gift to name the world and thereby to co-create with the Creator and Donor of the gift. Hispanics/Latinas historically have been chastised for speaking the

¹⁸ Ada María Isasi-Díaz has coined the phrase *Permítanme hablar* (permit me to speak) as a way to make the point that Latina women also have an opinion to contribute. See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Elements of a Mujerista Anthropology," *In The Embrace Of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O'Hara Graff (New York: Orbis, 1995), 90-101.

¹⁹ Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 11.

²⁰ This idea of the capacity of language implicit in the *Imago Dei* is reminiscent of the observation made by Hefner that the human being is created with a "destiny" that has the nuances of *gift*, determinism, purpose, and goal. See Hefner, "Fourth Locus," *Christian Dogmatics*, 324. I make the distinction that it is through the capacity *and gift* of language implicit in the *Imago Dei* that the human being is empowered to be a co-creator with God. This perspective is particularly relevant for the marginalized Spanish-speaking community whose language is considered suspect.

²¹ For further elaboration on this point see González, *Mañana*, 75-87.

Spanish language because it represents the language of a conquered people. It is considered a foreign language in the conquered land of the Southwest.²² Both the governmental and educational systems have attempted to eradicate this gift of the Creator, but the community resists these efforts because it recognizes that the Spanish language is the language of the heart.²³ It is the language of prayer and of communion with God.²⁴

Secondly, language is history. The gift of language allows the connection to the past. It gives the Hispanic/Latina community its sense of history and specificity within a culture that is not their own.²⁵ It nurtures the cultural memory

²² The American Southwest was acquired by the United States after the brief war with Mexico of 1846-1848. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848 ended the Mexican-American War. By this treaty Mexico ceded to the United States the present day states of New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah, Nevada and part of Colorado and agreed to the annexation of Texas by the U.S. with the Rio Grande as the border between the two nations. The terms of the treaty called for the respect of the culture, language, citizenship, and property rights of the native peoples but the terms were continually violated by the U.S. government and the new settlers. The breach has been a source of contention up until the present time. For an excellent review of this history see Justo González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 2, *The Reformation to the Present Day* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1985), 246-50.

²³ An example of the opposition to the use of the Spanish language in the church appeared in a message from Bishop James E. Bennett to the Southwestern Texas Synod in the synodical newsletter *The Vista*. In his message the bishop responded to a parishioner who complained because his message to the synod was now being printed in both English and Spanish. The bishop defended his use of the Spanish language as the language of love and concern for the people of God in the Southwest. See James Bennett, "From the Bishop," *The Vista: A Publication of the Southwestern Texas Synod* 11, no. 2, (1999): 2.

²⁴ There is a popular Spanish *dicho* (proverb) in the community that states: "French is the language of love. Italian is the language of song but Spanish is the language of God." The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) recently published a Spanish hymnal, *El Libro de Liturgia y Cántico*, which was the result of a concerted effort to produce a hymnal that would incorporate and affirm the historic hymnody of the Hispanic/Latina community in the language of the people. For a view from the Pentecostal perspective, Edwin David Aponte has written on the role of Spanish *coritos* (popular songs of praise and worship) as a source of affirmation of identity from within the liturgical practice of the church. These *coritos* are now part of the Hispanic/Latino Lutheran worship experience in many parts of the U.S. including the home church of this writer, St. John Lutheran Church, in San Juan, Texas. For a review of the significance of *coritos* in popular worship see Edwin David Aponte, "Coritos as Active Symbol in Latino Protestant Popular Religion," *Journal of Hispanic Latino Theology* 2, no. 3 (1995): 57-8.

²⁵ For a similar perspective on the importance of the Spanish language for the community see Isasi-Díaz, "Spanish: The Language of the Angels," *En la lucha*, 52-4.

of faith and reminds the community that it has a place of belonging in the heart of God.²⁶ It also provides the connection to the larger Hispanic/Latino community throughout the United States so that a sense of solidarity and community arises wherever Spanish is heard and spoken.²⁷ It helps to end the isolation that many immigrants feel when they enter this country and do not speak the English language.²⁸ It reminds them that they have a common history and familiar roots. It confers dignity.²⁹

The Story of Christian Anthropology

The Christian story of the human being would not be complete if it did not take into account the story of the fall of humanity. Genesis 3 records the fall as part of the larger creation narrative of the Yahwist or "J" writers of Genesis 2 and

²⁶ For the significance of cultural memory as a source of affirmation of identity and resistance to annihilation see Jeannette Rodríguez, "Sangre llama a sangre: Cultural Memory as a Source of Theological Insight," *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 117-33.

²⁷ Justo Gonzalez points out that the growing sense of unity among Hispanic Americans has two main foci. One is social and the other cultural. The cultural focus is the Spanish language and the culture and history associated with it. For a good discussion on this aspect of the Hispanic identity see González, "Our growing sense of unity," *Mañana*, 33-8.

²⁸ This sense of language as the link to the community is documented by the history of Spanish-speaking missionaries and pastors who were sent to south Texas to nurture the mission start that became St. John Lutheran Church in San Juan, Texas. Language became the bridge-builder between the missionaries and the immigrant community that fled the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20. See T. Michael Mackey, ed., *The Roots and Dynamics of Lutheran Hispanic Ministry in Texas* (LSPS, 1989), 16-7. More recently, language has played a key role in theological education and the mission development objectives of the ELCA. See Rodríguez, Jr. "Confessing the Faith," *Protestantes/Protestants*, 107-22.

²⁹ Ismael García makes this point when he writes that Spanish for the Hispanic/Latino community is more than a tool of communication. *It is central to our identity*. Furthermore, "to let it go for the sake of social acceptance and advancement, which are quite uncertain, is to contribute to the process of self-annihilation and of diminishing of our dignity." See García, *Dignidad*, 102-4.

3.³⁰ There are many and diverse theological interpretations of the fall.³¹ New Testament exegetes concur with the notion that human beings fell into sin, but are restored to God by the reconciling work of Christ. In his 1965 essay on the Christian understanding of the human being, Nathan Scott succinctly recapitulates the essence of the Christian story:

So now we have come full circle: created in the "image of God"; "fallen"; restored to God by Christ's reconciling work, for life in the Blessed Community of *diakonia*, of "deputyship," of service "for others" – this, in short, is the story that Christianity tells about humankind ...³²

Philip Hefner points out that Scott strikes the appropriate note in considering the human factor within the framework of the doctrine of creation: "He [Scott] calls attention to a drama of the human: created in the image of God, fallen, restored to God in Christ for service to others."³³ This Christian story contains the elements of a uniquely Christian theological anthropology. Fallen because of sin, yet from the very origin of the species the human being was created with a high destiny. This manifestation of ultimate purpose reflects the

³⁰ For a more detailed exegetical exposition of the narrative see Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation* (Fortress: 1964), 23-34. Westermann points out that the fall is a part of the larger narrative of creation as told by the P and J writers in the first three chapters of the book of Genesis.

³¹ John Gerhard listed five ways in which the *imago* might be said to be lost in the fall. He judged that in four of these ways, the image was *not* lost, namely, insofar as the *imago* refers (1) to the very essence of the human soul; (2) to the general similarities to divinity, intelligence, etc.; (3) human dominion over other creatures; and (4) some moral principles. It is in the fifth sense, when the *imago* refers to righteousness and holiness that the image of God is lost in the fall. The need of the human being for regeneration proves that the *imago* in this last sense is lost. See Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* IV, Locus 9, *The Doctrine of Man in Classical Lutheran Theology*, ed. Herman Preus and Edmund Smits (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962), 61-2.

³² Nathan A. Scott, Jr., "The Christian Understanding of Man," *Conflicting Images of Man*, ed. William Nicholls (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), 28.

³³ Hefner, "Fourth Locus," *Christian Dogmatics*, 323.

creation in the *imago Dei*, in the image and likeness of God. New Testament exegetes add that this high destiny is revealed and affirmed by the redemptive work of Christ who is the image of God (*eikon tou theou*) and therefore the image into which humans are formed.

In his work on the *imago Dei* James Childs indicates that the distinctive element of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* in the New Testament is the identification of Christ as the *eikon tou theou*.³⁴ This identification reflects the New Testament view of the image, which is to say St. Paul's view of the image, for it is only in the Pauline corpus that the notion of *eikon* receives any significant theological development. Childs points out that the number of references to *eikon* are not great in the New Testament even though they outnumber the instances where *tselem* has theological significance in the Old Testament.

In his important work on the image of God, Jacob Jervell warns against the assumption that the scarcity of references in the text indicates that the concept lacks importance for Paul. For Jervell, Paul's is a situational proclamation that should alert us to two things. In the first place, we should not expect a totally worked out systematic presentation of the doctrine of the image in Paul because it occurs within the context of addressing specific needs at specific times. Secondly, the importance of the concept should thus be judged not in terms of the number of times it occurs or the systematic clarity with which it

³⁴ James M. Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology" (Th.D.diss., Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1974), 210-1.

is expounded but in terms of the way in which the occasion of its expression brings it into relationship with the central concepts of Paul's theology.³⁵

The use of *eikon* in the context of 2 Cor. 3:18 – 4:6 illustrates the second point. Here the apostle expresses his concern to establish his authority as an apostle. Paul grounds the authority of his proclamation on Christ who emerges in his *kerygma*. In Christ, God is revealed. Paul asserts that the glorified and victorious Christ is the very *eikon tou theou*. The revelation of God in the preaching of Christ confirms this notion.

To speak of Christ as the image of God confers on him the role of Revealer and Savior. He is the image of God in the unique sense that in Christ God reveals God-self most fully. The glory of God interpreted as God's gracious being and action toward humanity reveals the context of this image. Image here means likeness or copy (*Abbild*). The apostolic proclamation heralds, in this context, a second act of creation. Humanity experiences transformation through the hearing of the word of witness to Christ. By seeing him as the image of God human beings become actual "copies" (*Abbild*) of the image of which Christ is the prototype (*Vorbild*).

The transformation involves the bestowal of the glory of God upon the faithful. Believers are justified or made righteous (*dikaiosyne*) by faith in Christ. The notion of justification is not merely a forensic declaration but has reference

³⁵ Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen. 1, 26-7. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen*. *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, Neue Folge, 58 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 171-2, cited in Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 210-57.

to the indwelling of the Spirit as well, thereby indicating a new creation.³⁶ Here the apostle Paul enlists the concept of the image of God to defend his apostolate and to assert his proclamation as truly revelatory and salvatory. In the process Paul gives us a christological, soteriological and, in terms of the promise for believers, an eschatological interpretation of the image of God. Paul's reflections upon Genesis 1:26-27 are thus bound up with central concepts of his gospel.³⁷

Childs notes that scholars consider the passages that treat Christ as the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; and Phil. 2:6, together with the passages which refer to the new creation of the community in the image of God in Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49) to be christological baptismal hymns.³⁸ All in some way represent Paul's commentary on Genesis 1:26-27 and therefore express how Paul understands and develops the Old Testament concept of the image of God from the perspective of Christology.³⁹ Further, in these passages

³⁶ For a more recent view of the christological implications of justification in Luther's thought, see Tuomo Mannermaa, "Justification and Theosis in Lutheran-Orthodox Perspective," *Union With Christ, The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 25-41.

³⁷ Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei*, 173-97. Childs points out that according to Jervell the glory (*doxa*) of Christ, a concept associated with the image in Psalm 8, may be equated both with the image and with righteousness (*dikaioσύνη*). Christ is the image in that the glory of God, the *dikaioσύνη tou theou*, shows forth in him. The believer shares in that glory in Christ; that is, she becomes the righteousness of Christ, which is to say, she is transformed in the likeness of the very image of God, Jesus the Christ. The eschatological element here is comprehended in Jervell's observation that it is the risen and exalted Christ that is here being described as the image of God. Thus, the ultimate transformation of the believer, her new creation in the image, is an eschatological hope for her own resurrection.

³⁸ Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 213; Jervell, *Imago Dei*, 214. See also Edvin Laarson, *Christus als Vorbild: Eine Untersuchung zu den Paulinischen Tauf- und Eikon-texten, Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis*, 23 (Upsala: Amqvist & Wiksells, 1962), 189.

³⁹ Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 213; See also Jervell, *Imago Dei*, 197-213. Childs observes that the connection between those passages and Genesis 1 is almost self-evident in most cases. For example: Col. 1:15-16 speaks of both creation and the image of God in

where Christ is called the *eikon tou theou* we are at the center of Pauline theology; there are no christological formulas in Paul that are more clearly and precisely stated.⁴⁰

Jervell and other New Testament exegetes agree that there is no restoration or "back-to-origins" motif in the Pauline corpus. The Christ-event initiates something *radically new* which gives history a new direction.⁴¹ The new creation in the Pauline epistles thus does not entail a return to the original creation. The old "physical" person, the person of dust, receives a new "heavenly" or "spiritual body" in the resurrection. The Christian will bear this image of the resurrected and exalted Christ.

Nothing in the Pauline corpus indicates that the New Testament signals a radical change in the Old Testament's understanding of the image as the concept applies to humanity. The image is a relational term and it is so for Paul and for Luther and for the unknown authors of Ephesians and Colossians (if indeed Paul is not their author). The promise of the new creation in Jesus Christ for the fulfillment of the image of God in the resurrection of the body is, ultimately, the promise of intimate communion and union with God in Christ for the "whole" person. This, Childs claims, is the vision of Genesis as the

immediate juxtaposition. It speaks of Christ as both *arche* and *prototokos* (v.18), reflecting the role that the rabbis assigned to the Law and Israel in the teaching on the creation in Genesis 1. And, finally Christ's lordship over the world (vv. 16, 17, or v. 20) in connection with his being the image of God parallels the connection between Adam's divine likeness and his sovereignty.

⁴⁰ Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 213; Jervell, *Imago Dei*, 214.

⁴¹ Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 243. See also Roy A. Harrisville, "The Concept of Newness in the New Testament" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1953), 376-83 (emphasis added).

typologies of New Testament exegetes demonstrate. Both views are relational and personal for both see humanity in terms of relationship to God. Thus, it seems legitimate to say that the image is not lost in the New Testament view as it is not lost in the Old Testament, and that what the New Testament scholar Edvin Laarson calls a "reduction" – the loss of glory, the loss of dominion, and ultimately death itself – are the fruits of humanity's rebellion against itself, a creation after the image of God.⁴² This recalls Helmut Thielicke's insight concerning the relationship of sin to the image of God. For Thielicke, the image does not suffer loss but exists in a negative mode that can only be rendered positive in the new creation of Christ.⁴³

The Patristic Period

The treatment of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* in the tradition of the church is indeed long and complex and at times inconsistent. However, the decisive points in the history of Christian thought regarding the doctrine as well as the options that have been developed throughout that history are well

⁴² Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 252. See also Edvin Laarson, *Christus als Vorbild*, 189.

⁴³ Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 253. Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, vol. I, trans. and ed. William Lazareth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 150-72. T.W. Manson is not far from the truth: "What is the conclusion concerning the image of God in humanity? Sin did not totally destroy this image. It could not since it was of God's creation. Sin did not change God's purposes for humanity. Even sinful humanity retains, to a degree, the image of God. Humanity retains it fully in the sense that God's purposes do not change for humanity. Humanity retains it only to a limited degree in the present state, if the thought is immediate ability to have communion with God. Humanity is made to respond to God and is responsible to God. This is true of all – saints and sinners. T.W. Manson, "Man: His Dignity and Worth," *Review and Expositor* (July, 1954): 304.

known.⁴⁴ For easier reference these can be viewed as falling within two categories: those interpretations of the *imago Dei* that speak of it in terms of specific human attributes, and those that speak of it as a fundamental relationship between God and the human.⁴⁵ In the first group we find the apologists of the early church.

The renowned teacher and bishop Gregory of Nyssa (331-395 C.E.) is perhaps best known for affirming the human dignity of the human race. Gregory follows the rabbinic tradition by explaining that after God created the world "as a royal dwelling place for the future King,"⁴⁶ God created the human "as a being fit to exercise royal rule" as "the living image of the universal King."⁴⁷ For Gregory, "the soul immediately shows its royal and exalted character, far removed as it is from the lowliness of private station, in that it owns no master, and is self-governed, ruled autocratically by its own will."⁴⁸

Gregory asserts that the notion of the image in Scripture indicates the dignity of humanity as more precious than all the rest of creation. As the living

⁴⁴ Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 207-257. Childs suggests five categories: (1) the *imago* as ideal humanity (Gregory of Nyssa, Aquinas, Schleiermacher); (2) dualistic interpretations (Irenaeus, Aquinas); (3) the *imago* as immortal spirit (Origen); (4) ontological monism, that is, the *imago* indicates an "ontological communion between God and man [*sic*] that is constitutive of man's [*sic*] being" (Augustine, Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr); and (4) theological monism, that is, a relationship of the total human person to God, described in theological terms (Luther, Calvin, Barth, Brunner). See Hefner, "Fourth Locus," *Christian Dogmatics*, 331.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Officio* 2, I.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 4, I. The opposite theme—that of the emperor as sole representative of God's sovereignty on earth, a theme often supported with reference to Romans 13:1—does emerge, however, especially among theologians of the Byzantine era, as G.E.M. de St. Croix notes: *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1981), 397-400.

⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 4, I.

image of the King, humanity participates in the royalty of the creator. Sovereignty is not the only mark of royalty. Virtue, immortality, and righteousness are also marks of this royal recognition as are purity, freedom from passion, blessedness, and alienation from evil, and all those attributes of the like kind which help to form in humanity the likeness of God.⁴⁹

The human being has inherent dignity by virtue of creation in the image and likeness of God. This creation in like kind reflects the greatness and goodness of humanity. The human resembles the archetype in being filled with all good.⁵⁰ Intelligence and reason distinguish the human from the rest of the creation. Besides dominion over the earth and the animals, the gift of royal sovereignty conveys the noble quality of moral freedom:

Thus there is in us the principle of all excellence, all virtue and wisdom, and every higher thing that we conceive: but pre-eminent among all is the fact that we are free from necessity, and not in bondage to any natural power, but have decision in our own power as we please; for virtue is a voluntary thing, subject to no dominion. Whatever is the result of compulsion and force cannot be virtue.⁵¹

All of humanity shares in the moral freedom that is characteristic of the *imago Dei*. This idea became so popular with the early church that many Christian converts of the first three centuries regarded the proclamation of the moral freedom to rule oneself as virtually synonymous with "the gospel."⁵² The *imago* includes love (since Christ has loved us), wisdom, and possession of the word. Like the majority of the Greek fathers of the early church, Gregory holds a

⁴⁹ Ibid., 4, V.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 16, II-X.

⁵¹ Ibid., 16, II.

rather optimistic view in asserting that the noble qualities ascribed to the image, including free will (which is itself the source of sinning), remain even after the fall.

The Christian philosopher and apologist Justin (110-160 C.E.) is also optimistic about the nature of humanity. He attempts to harmonize Christianity with Platonic philosophy. Though differing from Plato with regard to the immortality of the soul, in particular, he concurs in his understanding of the human. Like Plato he believes in the soul's kinship to God, the possession of a free will, and punishment after death.⁵³ For the Apologists, redemption bears the meaning of enlightenment. In summarizing the Apologists on this point, Adolph Harnack offers this viewpoint:

Christianity is the enlightenment corresponding to the natural but impaired knowledge of man [*sic*]. It embraces all the elements of truth in philosophy, whence it is the philosophy; and helps man [*sic*] to realize the knowledge with which he is naturally endowed.⁵⁴

This idea receives rational grounding from their doctrine of Christ as the *Logos*. The *Logos* not only imparts new knowledge but also frees humanity from the bondage to ignorance, error, and the demons who lead humanity astray.⁵⁵ The idea of the *Logos* as One who grants freedom and knowledge or self-awareness had a strong influence on the self-understanding of the early church. The *Logos*

⁵² Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, first ed. (New York: Random House, 1989), 99.

⁵³ Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 10-2. For an excellent exposition of early Christian thought see the discussion by Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 11-77.

⁵⁴ Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma, II*, trans. from the third German edition by Neil Buchanan (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), 221.

⁵⁵ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, second ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 166-70.

conferred human dignity where previously none existed among certain sectors of the population such as slaves and women and children.⁵⁶ The idea of human dignity for the oppressed was a novel and attractive idea in the early church and led to its increase. Later historical development would deny these same people their human dignity based on a view that denied them participation in the *Logos*.⁵⁷

Justin indicates that freedom of the will and reason in the service of moral responsibility are vital elements of the creation of humanity. As a consequence, humanity must be held responsible for the moral governance of life in the face of eternal reward or punishment. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin gives expression to yet another common belief of the Apologists. They believed that humanity was created neither mortal nor immortal but was free to attain to one or the other.⁵⁸ In his *Three Books to Autolycus*, Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, writes that the phrase "*in our image and after our likeness*" indicates the dignity of humanity.⁵⁹ He believed that in Paradise humanity had the opportunity to grow to the maturity of immortality. He maintained the view that humanity was created neither mortal nor immortal but of a middle nature with freedom and power over oneself. Thus by the will to disobedience humanity incurred death.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ See Pagels, *Adam, Eve and The Serpent*, 52-6.

⁵⁷ This point will be examined further in the discussion concerning the denial of human dignity in the Hispanic/Latina community.

⁵⁸ Justin, *Second Apology*, VII; *Dialogue with Trypho*, V.

⁵⁹ Theophilus to Autolycus, II, 18.

⁶⁰ Ibid. IV, 24, 27.

Finally, it is Justin who adds that the peculiar value of humanity as the image of God includes the bodily nature.⁶¹ Justin derives this notion on the basis of the creation narrative and enlists it as a proof for the possibility of the resurrection of the flesh.⁶² He also invoked Genesis to argue that humankind owes allegiance only to the God who created all humanity -- the God of Israel, now the God of the Christians -- and not to the gods of Rome, whom Justin denounced as demons.⁶³

Tatian, a disciple of Justin, speaks of the image of God in humanity as the capacity for immortality. The attainment of this capacity depends on the freedom of choice. In transgression against the will of God, the human who is created to share in the immortal becomes mortal.⁶⁴ In his discussion of the freedom and responsibility of humanity, Tatian observes that the view of humanity in the image of God means far more than simply speaking of the human as a rational animal. In this the philosophers miss the mark: "For it is the peculiar dignity of humanity to be created for communion with God."⁶⁵ Without this quality of communion humanity would differ from the animals that are not created in the image only in having an articulate language.⁶⁶

⁶¹ This perspective changes with St. Augustine and his views on the nature of sinful humanity. Feminist theologians are recovering affirmative images of the bodily nature to controvert the negative views promulgated by St. Augustine that have influenced the church up until the present time. They affirm the human as an embodied whole in contradistinction to the classical Greek dichotomy of the body/soul split. For a more detailed exposition see Pagels *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, 127-50.

⁶² *On the Resurrection*, VII.

⁶³ Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, xxiii.

⁶⁴ *Tatian to the Greeks*, VII, XI.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, XV.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

About twenty years after Justin had been beheaded for refusing to worship the Roman gods, Clement of Alexandria (140-215 C.E.) took the statement that God had created humanity in the image of God as evidence of human equality—and as an indictment against the imperial cult.⁶⁷ From such beginnings, in open defiance of the totalitarian Roman state, and often met with brute violence, Christians forged the basis for what would become, centuries later, the Western ideas of freedom and of the infinite value of each human life.⁶⁸

St. Irenaeus (135-200 C.E.) is perhaps best known for teaching a twofold interpretation of the image of God based on a distinction between *image* and *likeness* as they appear in Genesis 1:26.⁶⁹ Much of what he wrote on the subject is taken from his monumental polemic against the Gnostics, *Against Heresies*.⁷⁰ Basically what he understood as *image* referred to reason and free will whereas *likeness* referred to the relationship with God that was lost during the fall.⁷¹ The human is conformed to the image and *likeness* (similitude) of God by the outpouring of the Spirit. In distinction from *image*, which includes the body and soul and especially the reason and freedom that remain despite sin, the human being acquires the *likeness* of God as a supernatural gift.⁷² As a

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., xxiii-xxiv.

⁶⁹ Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), 503-4. See also David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 74-5.

⁷⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 6, 1.

⁷¹ Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, 503-4.

⁷² Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, 78.

result of sin, the human being loses this *likeness* of God which can only be restored by grace through Christ.⁷³ Herein we find the genesis of a dualistic view of humanity that dichotomizes between nature and grace or between nature (image) and supernature (likeness).⁷⁴ This *likeness* corresponds to the *justitia originalis*, a supernatural gift of grace added to human nature that grants supernatural communion with God. Thomas Aquinas later expounds on this dichotomy in the scholastic Roman Catholic tradition that Martin Luther refutes and rejects. This divergence of interpretation influences the way the human is understood in relationship to God and will be the subject of further elaboration below.

The apologists during this early church period emphasize the high value of the human being as a recurring theme in their works. They appear to be in uniform agreement with the psalmist in elevating the nature of humanity to a degree only slightly lower than the angels (Psalm 8). The noble characteristics they perceive in the human such as dignity, purity and virtue, moral freedom and responsibility, reason in the service of morality, the ability to commune with God, as well as the bodily nature as a reflection of the divine and royal image, are all evidence of an exalted view of humanity that was to characterize the early church movement and make it an appealing force for the community of the marginalized. These reflections of the human were the basis for an early Christian theological anthropology that would leave its mark on the Roman

⁷³ See Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 34-5. Also see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 16, 2.

Empire as the Christian church continued to grow as a subversive force within the empire.⁷⁵ This elevated view of humanity would be a dynamic force in opposing the Roman notions of conquest and subjugation of foreign peoples.⁷⁶

Justo González describes a comparable situation in the Hispanic/Latina reality in the United States. The Hispanic/Latina community is a community in exile and in a sense under foreign rule due to conquest. It is a community that strives to preserve its dignity based on its understanding of the human family.⁷⁷ For González, to be fully human is to be-for-others. In this scenario no one exercises power over others for that would lead to the dehumanization of everyone and the loss of our for-otherness.

González and other Hispanic/Latina scholars affirm the human being in other ways. They express and affirm the value of the human distinctively in community and in being-for-others.⁷⁸ Sin is the violation of that for-otherness and the violation of God's image in us, which for González is precisely the image

⁷⁴ See Childs, 34-5. Also see Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, 93.

⁷⁵ González indicates that as a minority in the Roman Empire the early Christians became outlaws for God when they followed their conscience and refused to obey the law that required that the emperor be worshiped as God. This was no sin but was rather the crown of Christian faithfulness. In this way they followed the same path as the convicted outlaw and executed criminal, Jesus of Nazareth. In a similar way Moses and his followers broke the laws of Egypt when they opposed the Pharaoh and his legions in obtaining the human dignity of the Hebrew people. See González, *Mañana*, 134.

⁷⁶ Ibid. González points out that the early Christians, by having a common table at which master and slave ate together, broke the law of Rome. In similar manner in our century, Martin Luther King, Jr. opposed the segregation laws of the nation that denied and suppressed the human dignity of all people. See M. L. King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1986), 289-302.

⁷⁷ González, *Mañana*, 131.

⁷⁸ For similar views see Isasi-Díaz, *En la lucha*, 34-54; García, *Dignidad*, 130-72.

of God's for-otherness.⁷⁹ The Hispanic/Latina affirmation of the oppressed minority differs from the way the early church theologians affirmed the human being. While these early theologians affirmed the capacities of the human in their abilities to be *like God*, their interpretation tended to focus on the physical and psychical merits of the individual as a created being. They focused less on the human as a social and relational being who as a communal person reflects the image of the God who cares for others as exemplified in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.⁸⁰

The notion of the exiled community affirming its dignity in the face of oppressive conditions is not unlike the Hebrew P writers who affirmed the dignity of the Hebrew community when they constructed the Genesis texts of the *imago Dei*. They wrote these texts during or soon after the Babylonian exile and captivity. This experience parallels the Hispanic/Latina reality. They reveal the human quest for identity, value, and human dignity in light of the encounter and experience of God.⁸¹

As Westermann helps us to see, the principal themes of Genesis 1-11 are present not only in the early histories of peoples from all over the earth, but they

⁷⁹ González, *Mañana*, 136-37.

⁸⁰ Wulfhart Pannenberg indicates that the exegetes of the early church and the Middle Ages looked for the content of the image of God in a kinship of the human soul with God, while the Reformers found it rather in the union of the human will with God's will which the first human being had by reason of original justice. He distinguishes from historical interpretations by placing the emphasis on the relationship to the world as expression of the image of God. This view expresses a responsibility for the care of creation as proper to the rule over creation. He conceives the destiny of human beings to be images of God as realized in the life of Jesus Christ. This life in Christ expresses itself in human community. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 74-9, 531.

⁸¹ For similar views on the search for identity and affirmation of human dignity in the Mexican-American experience, see Virgil Elizondo, *The Future is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* (Bloomington, IN: MeyerStone, 1988).

express something common to all human history and significant for the future of humanity.⁸² This includes the many and varied questions and answers about origins and the role of the human in creation. Westermann argues that the word of God arises in the biblical tradition from God's actions on behalf of God's people and that it is the harmonization of the many voices within it that constitutes the reliability of their witness.⁸³ The Hispanic/Latina voice and witness of God's actions in their historical journey resonates with the historical witness of the biblical tradition and with the approbation formula of Genesis 1:31 that sums up the entire work of creation: "And God saw that it was very good" (NRSV).⁸⁴

St. Augustine: A Reinterpretation

St. Augustine (354-430 C.E.) developed a more extensive doctrine of sin that had an impact upon the interpretation of the *imago Dei*. Instead of the freedom of the will and the royal dignity of humanity, Augustine emphasized the enslavement to sin as the primary characteristic of the human. In the *City of God*

⁸² Westermann, *Genesis*, 2.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Westermann points out that in God's sight the entire creation is good, in spite of all that seems incomprehensible, cruel, and terrible to human beings. The goodness of creation is based solely on God's authority. Because it is good in God's sight, joy in God's creation (as it is expressed in the praise of creation in the Psalms) is set free in human beings. Moreover, this "goodness" also comprehends beauty (the Hebrew word can mean both "good" and "beautiful"); joy in God's creation contains within itself all joy in what is beautiful. Westermann, *Genesis*, 11-12. This affirmation of goodness is particularly relevant for the Hispanic/Latina community because it has often experienced the denial of approbation. The Hispanic/Latina community controverts this negative view by affirming God's actions of liberation in its history. See Elizondo, *The Galilean Journey*; also, Maldonado, ed., *Protestantes/Protestants*. Hispanic hymnody reflects this joy and praise of God who affirms the goodness of our creation. See Aponte, "Coritos," 57-8.

Augustine developed his understanding of what came to be known as the doctrine of original sin. He concluded that the human was a wretched being irreparably damaged by the fall. The enslavement to sin manifested itself in the nature of concupiscence. Recalling in the *Confessions* his own experience with sexual struggle Augustine surmised that the human was not free to choose the morally good and suffered in the body the punishment for the disobedience of the first couple in Paradise:

The entire human race that was to pass through woman into offspring was contained in the first man when that married couple received the divine sentence condemning them to punishment, and humanity produced what humanity became, not what it was when created, but when, having sinned, it was punished.⁸⁵

Augustine based this conclusion on a reading of Romans 5:12. The Greek text reads, "Through one man [or, because of one man,] sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and thus death came upon all men, *in that* all sinned."⁸⁶ Whereas the apologists interpreted the text to mean that the sin of Adam brought death into the world, and death came upon all because "all sinned," Augustine read the passage in Latin and misinterpreted the Greek connotations; thus he misread the last phrase as referring to Adam. He insisted that it meant that "death came upon all men, in whom all sinned" and that the sin of that "one man," Adam, brought upon humanity not only universal death, but also universal and inevitable sin. He used the passage to deny that human beings have free moral choice, which Jews and Christians had traditionally

⁸⁵ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 13,13. Emphasis added.

⁸⁶ Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, 109.

regarded as the birthright of humanity made "in God's image."⁸⁷ Augustine declared that the whole human race inherited from Adam a nature irreversibly damaged by sin. "For we all were in that one man, since all of us were that one man who fell into sin through the woman who was made from him."⁸⁸ Thus humanity, once given the unflawed glory of creation and the freedom of the will, actually enjoyed these only in those brief primordial moments in Paradise. In this way Augustine denied both the goodness of creation in its original state and the freedom of the will now enslaved by sin.

With Paradise lost there was also a loss of human dignity. The creation originally good as declared in Genesis 1:31 was now no longer *very good*. The sin of rebellion now pervades the human body. Its effect is transmitted through the semen. One can observe this in the "disobedient members" of the body and in the spontaneous sexual desire that is the clearest evidence of this effect:

After Adam and Eve disobeyed ... they felt for the first time a movement of disobedience in their flesh, as punishment in kind for their own disobedience to God The soul, which had taken a perverse delight in its own liberty and disdained to serve God, was now deprived of its original master over the body.⁸⁹

In effect "the sexual desire [*libido*] of our disobedient members arose in those first human beings as a result of the sin of disobedience ... and because a shameless movement [*impudens motus*] resisted the rule of their will, they covered their *shameful* members" (emphasis mine).⁹⁰ Because of the sin of

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 13,14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 13,13.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 13, 24. Emphasis added.

disobedience and the concomitant effect on the human body the arousal function is now independent of the rightful rule of the will: "Because of this, these members are rightly called *pudenda* [parts of shame] because they excite themselves just as they like, in opposition to the mind which is their master, as if they were their own masters."⁹¹ In other words, the human body is no longer under the control of the mind and loses the grace and dignity of the original creation; the human incurs shame in the nature of disobedience.

The relationship between a man and a woman also experienced the loss of dignity. The woman was originally created equal with man in regard to her rational soul, but her formation from Adam's rib established her as the "weaker part of the human couple."⁹² Being closely connected with bodily passion, woman, although created to be man's helper, became his temptress and led him into disaster.⁹³ The Genesis account describes the result: God reinforced the husband's authority over his wife, placing divine sanction upon the social, legal, and economic machinery of male domination.⁹⁴ The character of this relationship has colored human history ever since often to the denigration of both the man and the woman.

⁹¹ Augustine, *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione* 2, 2. See also, *De Civitate Dei* 14,17.

⁹² Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 15,16; 19,13.

⁹³ Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, 114; see also the excellent discussion by Kari Elizabeth Borrens, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Women in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Charles H. Talbot (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 15-34.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

The dark history of human slavery is yet another manifestation of the loss of human dignity. Augustine agrees with John Chrysostom that "God did not want a rational being, made in his [*sic*] image, to have dominion over any except irrational creatures; not man [*sic*] over men [*sic*], but man [*sic*] over the beasts."⁹⁵ He asserts that man's [*sic*] dominion over other men [*sic*] violates their *original equality*; hence, "such a condition as slavery could only have arisen as a result of sin" (emphasis mine).⁹⁶ The history of slavery in the Americas provides ample evidence of the inequality and indignity suffered by the human family.⁹⁷ The torrid history of race relations resulting from the discovery of the Western Hemisphere bears witness to this reality.⁹⁸

Augustine's interpretation of the sinful nature of the human is a radical shift from earlier interpretations.⁹⁹ The early apologists had understood the human to be of high and noble character. Up until the time of Augustine the early church theologians affirmed the nature of the human being as good for it had been created in the *imago Dei*. The incarnation of the *Logos* in Jesus Christ reflected this goodness. Sin, to be sure, marred the image, but it did not incapacitate the human from being rational and relational with God. The human still retained the capacity to "grasp" God in the orders of creation by what is seen

⁹⁵ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 19,15.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ See the discussion on this subject by Justo González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 2: *The Reformation to the Present Day*, 217-318.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ For recent Augustinian scholarship on this theme see William S. Babcock, ed., *The Ethics of St. Augustine* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991); Sandra Lee Dixon, *Augustine: The Scattered and*

and reasoned and willed by human freedom. The theologians of this early period emphasized the vertical relationship with God: the human was created in the *imago Dei* for the purpose of relationship with God (Irenaeus). The incarnation of the Word was evidence of this purpose. Human freedom was good and the human body was good.

Augustine shifted the focus by his emphasis on the sinful nature of the human. This shift is important for understanding the loss and recovery of human dignity in later theological development. By his emphasis on the dark side of human nature Augustine promoted a more negative view of humanity that would later influence Martin Luther and his understanding of the bondage of the will.¹⁰⁰ Augustine viewed the effects of the Fall in death, depravity, lust, and the like – effects that corrupt both body and spirit. These manifold miseries proceed from a misuse of the free will, indicating that if the image was not defaced and were humanity in virtue of this image in true communion with God, the whole being would possess the “wholeness” intended by the Creator.¹⁰¹ The positive corollary of this human condition is the promise of a glorified spiritual body in the

Gathered Self (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), chapters six and eight; T. Kermit Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 1995), 212-3.

¹⁰⁰ See Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, vol. 33 of *Luther's Works*, trans. Philip S. Watson and Benjamin Drewery, ed. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972). In this treatise, Luther refutes Erasmus' treatise, *On the Freedom of the Will*, and argues instead for the impotence of the human will in its fallen condition. In his treatise, Luther affirms the traditional Augustinian belief in humanity's total dependence upon God's grace for justification. See Erasmus, “On the Freedom of the Will,” in *Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. 17 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969).

¹⁰¹ Childs, “The Imago Dei and Eschatology,” 73-4; see Augustine, *Enchiridion*, XXVI, XXVII; *The City of God*, XIII, xiv-xxiii. Childs points out that in these chapters Augustine also takes pains to distinguish himself from the Platonists with regard to the body-soul dichotomy, the possibility of earthly bodies being made incorruptible and eternal, and the fact that the spiritual body of the resurrection is indeed spiritual.

resurrection wherein spirit and flesh shall be in harmony and the body cleansed of all its corruption.¹⁰² This is a concomitant view of the renewal of the image by grace in Christ.

According to Childs' analysis, despite the unmistakable flavor of Augustine's neo-Platonism, he is ultimately preserved from a dualistic concept of humanity by his biblical faith. Augustine does not teach a total loss of the image or the loss of one part of it in the right relationship with God. He teaches a single image concept that refers to the ontological communion with God and which, though damaged, still remains.¹⁰³ It is this theological departure from the early church theologians and from the influence of Hellenistic philosophical discourse that makes Augustine's views so significant for the monistic interpretation of the image that is recaptured and affirmed by Martin Luther. This later development will be examined further in light of Martin Luther's interpretation of justification by faith as a theology that affirms the totality of the person in her relationship to God. First, let us briefly examine the thought of Thomas Aquinas and his understanding of the *imago Dei*.

The Medieval Period

Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224-1274 C. E.) followed the duality of the image doctrine displayed in Irenaeus and other apologists. In his famous systematic

¹⁰² Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 74. See Augustine, *Enchiridion*, LXXXIX – XCII.

¹⁰³ Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 74. On the question of whether Augustine is guilty of Platonic dualism see the discussion by Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 72. Childs holds that Augustine's apparent dualism of setting the image in the soul over against the body is mitigated by his scriptural understanding of the undefiled image prior to the Fall in which *the entire human being is whole* and the effects of the Fall which produce death, depravity, lust, etc. – effects that corrupt both body and spirit.

theology, the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas expanded the distinction between *image* and *likeness* initiated by Irenaeus. He heightens the division between what the human is by nature and what the human is or will be by grace. In his schema the image refers to the basic endowment with reason, but he understands this rationality of the natural image to include the capacity for the natural knowledge and love of God.¹⁰⁴ The original nature of the human receives a *donum gratia superaditum*, or a superadded gift of grace that allows the human to achieve the supernatural good. In the condition of corrupt human nature the human needs to have this particular grace infused so as to achieve the meritorious good of supernatural virtue.¹⁰⁵ This infusion of grace restores the *imago Dei*.

For Aquinas the human after the fall loses this superadded gift of grace and the loss means several things. First, it indicates the privation of original justice whereby the soul acquires the capacity to obey God. This privation of justice or righteousness is original sin. It manifests itself in concupiscence; that is, in the sinful corruption of nature.¹⁰⁶ Without the *rectitudo* of original justice whereby the elements that constitute human nature are rectified and in an ordered relationship with themselves and God - reason being subject to God and the lower powers to reason - human nature does not function according to divine

¹⁰⁴ *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 60, article 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Part III, Question 109, article 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

intent.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, since sin does not destroy the natural image of human rationality, the corrupt natural human is not incapable of the good altogether. The natural inclination to virtue, which is part of the natural *imago Dei*, is diminished by sin but not destroyed.¹⁰⁸ Fallen humanity is like a sick person who lacks the wholeness to accomplish all that is natural to the person.¹⁰⁹

For Aquinas the image as human rationality is an indelible ontic endowment that leads to the observation that, despite the loss of the superadded gift, the *donum superadditum*, the essential nature of the human is not destroyed by the Fall.¹¹⁰ In his understanding, the *imago* functions at two levels: it is the superadded gift that enables the attainment of the good, and it is also the constant (pre- and post-fall) human nature that enables the knowledge and love of God. Roman Catholic scholastic theology adhered to this interpretation of the human at the time of the Reformation.¹¹¹ For Childs, the Thomistic system is bent on synthesis, not on dualism:

It is in appreciation of this synthetic drive in the Thomistic system that one understands the fullest dimensions of the axiom, "grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it." Under this system, man, [*sic*] universally a rational creature naturally inclined to the good, has the ability to understand his own existence and the reality in which he participates as ordered under God and ultimately fulfilled in the perfection of that relationship. Such fulfillment is the realization of the good. By nature man [*sic*] perceives and inclines

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., Question 85, article 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., Question 109, article 2.

¹¹⁰ See Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 47-48.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 48.

toward this good, achieving it in some small measure proportionate to his damaged natural abilities. By Grace, this good is his.¹¹²

Luther rejected the Thomistic system and the two-fold understanding of the doctrine as developed by Irenaeus and instead offered a single concept as an explanation of the *imago Dei*. For Luther, the relationship between God and the human was the *imago*. He describes the image of God in Adam in this way:

Therefore the image of God, according to which Adam was created, was something far more distinguished and excellent, since obviously no leprosy of sin adhered either to his reason or to his will. Both his inner and outer sensations were all of the purest kind. His intellect was the clearest, his memory was the best, and his will was the most straightforward – all in the most beautiful tranquility of the mind without fear of death and without any anxiety.¹¹³

Therefore my understanding of the image of God is this: that Adam had it in his being and that he not only knew God and believed that he was good, but also lived a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without fear of death or of any other danger, and was content with God's favor. In this form it reveals itself in the instance of Eve, who speaks with the serpent without any fear.¹¹⁴

Therefore that image of God was something most excellent, in which were included eternal life, everlasting freedom from fear, and everything that is good.¹¹⁵

As indicated by his *Lectures on Genesis*, for Luther and the Reformation that largely followed him, the image of God is identified with original righteousness (*justitia originalis*). Luther offers a theological understanding of humanity that differs and shifts from the prevailing philosophical tradition of the scholastics. Emil Brunner describes it in this way:

¹¹² Ibid., 50.

¹¹³ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, vol. I *Luther's Works*, 62.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 62-63.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 65.

The *imago Dei* is the same as the *justitia originalis*. The nature of man [*sic*] is again understood theologically and not philosophically, man [*sic*] as man [*sic*] is once more a theological being, that is, as man [*sic*] he can only be understood in the light of the Word of God. That is Luther's achievement.¹¹⁶

Luther's formulation of the *imago* doctrine in terms of a total orientation of the human toward God is pivotal for his understanding of the central doctrine of the Reformation, justification *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. Luther criticized the early theologians because their dualistic interpretations of the image of God fostered "works" and did not contribute to an adequate understanding of the image of God in fallen humanity.¹¹⁷ Even though Luther did not favor the ontological speculations of Augustine, which attempted to find evidence of the image in humanity by seeking trinities in the human composition as evidence of reflections of the divine Trinity,¹¹⁸ he was able to recapture Augustine's critique of the body/soul dualism that was nurtured in the tradition from Irenaeus to Aquinas. Luther adopted a monistic concept of the image whereby he placed the emphasis on the divine initiative of God in recovering fallen humanity.¹¹⁹ Thus

¹¹⁶ Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, 508.

¹¹⁷ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, 61. According to Luther, whatever the image is, it is now lost: "Wherefore when we now attempt to speak of the image we speak of a thing unknown, an image which we have not only not experienced, but the contrary to which we have experienced all our lives and experience still. Of this image therefore all we now possess are the mere words "image of God." ... But there was in Adam an illumined reason, a true knowledge of God and a will the most upright to love both God and his neighbour [*sic*]..."; see Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, 63.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

¹¹⁹ See Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 106-107. Childs points out that in the final analysis Luther's understanding of the doctrine of the image of God in humanity is developed as a result of theological concerns more than as a result of exegetical insight. Luther is concerned that humanity not be able to retain any ability to save or justify itself. According to Reinhold Niebuhr, Luther's concern is to re-establish the Augustinian doctrine of original sin against the semi-Pelagianism of Catholicism and this effort colors his interpretation of the image as lost. Niebuhr is highly critical of Luther and contends that Luther's extravagant descriptions of the state of

humanity can only be justified *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. With Augustine, Luther is able to recover a more unified concept of the image that captures the unity and totality of the human constitution. It is this totality that is in relationship with God and restored by the divine initiative of God in Christ.

Luther criticized Aquinas because in his doctrine of the image humanity retained the power of remembering, understanding and loving God. For Aquinas human beings by nature love God more than they love themselves.¹²⁰ For Luther this view was untenable as the *imago Dei* could not be construed in any way that allowed sinful humanity some remaining ability to know and love God and, therefore, to contribute to salvation. For the Reformer, the memory, the will and the mind were depraved and incapable of grasping God.¹²¹ Thus the human could only know God by grace through faith and not by works. The loss of the image in sin was thus a loss of the right relationship in which and for which the human was created and that could only be restored by a faithful hope in Christ.

The Lutheran Confessions and the orthodox dogmaticians follow Luther's main emphasis in identifying the image of God with original righteousness and in asserting its total loss in the fall.¹²² As noted in the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession* and in the *Formula of Concord* fear and trust in God are the criteria

perfection before the Fall are so obviously prompted by the desire to accentuate man's [*sic*] present state of sin, misery and death that they are, compared with both Augustine and Calvin, so inexact that his thought is not very helpful in interpreting the real import of the Christian conception of the image of God. As such, the Protestant Reformation must be regarded, generally, as a revival of Augustinianism both in its view of the human situation and its interpretation of the plan of God to meet that situation. See R. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1941), 159.

¹²⁰ See Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, 125.

¹²¹ See Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, 61.

¹²² See Childs, 111 f.

of the *imago Dei* by their presence, and of original sin by their absence.¹²³ In general the Confessions speak of the image of God as denoting a power and capacity for sustaining a right relationship of communion and union with God. For Lutheranism original righteousness is a comprehensive concept, touching not simply moral and spiritual values of the will but human wisdom and even the physical constitution.¹²⁴ The *Apology* includes "a balanced physical constitution" in its definition of original righteousness and Francis Pieper indicates that, while the soul was the real seat of the divine likeness, "the divine image was manifested also in the body, since the body is the organ of the soul and an essential part of man" [*sic*].¹²⁵ Gerhard expresses the matter in this way:

This is the description of the image of God in the first man [*sic*], given in the Scriptures, namely, that it was righteousness and true holiness, by which are meant the highest rectitude, integrity and conformity to the divine law, of all the powers of soul and body – the highest perfection, innocence and purity of the whole man [*sic*]

...¹²⁶

The Lutheran understanding of the *imago Dei* as an original righteousness that embraces the totality of the person is significant for any discussion concerning the restored integrity and dignity of the person of faith, especially from the point of view of the marginalized of history. Luther's writings

¹²³ *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, IV, 351; see also, *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration*, I, 10.

¹²⁴ See Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 112-13.

¹²⁵ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. I, trans. Theodore Engelder, et. al., (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 521.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 3d ed. rev. and trans. from the German and Latin by Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 224.

and the Reformation documents indicate that the human is *imago Dei* in relationship to God.¹²⁷ As Brunner puts it, for Luther, “man’s [sic] relationship to God is not something added to his human nature; it is the core and the ground of his *humanitas*.”¹²⁸ This idea includes the notion of the high value placed on the totality of the person who is affirmed as a wholly good creation of God while at the same time wholly contaminated or corrupted by sin.¹²⁹ Against Flacius, who taught that original sin was *substantia* or part of the essence of human being, the Confessions maintain that, though this sin is a “deep corruption of nature,” it is still *accidens*; that is, original sin is not a part of the original essence of the human being but an accidental corruption attributable to the evil schemes of

¹²⁷ According to Pannenberg, the Reformation view of the image of God in humanity departs from the early church and the Medieval scholastic interpretations by regarding the image of God not as the foundation of a distinct, actual communion with God, namely the divinely given justice of the first human being (*iustitia originalis*), but as identical with this actual relation to God. Thus the Fall was regarded as bringing the loss not only of the *similitudo* but of the *imago* itself. The difference between the Reformed and the medieval Catholic views in the question of whether human nature itself was corrupted in the fall is therefore to be explained by different views on the relation between *iustitia originalis* and *imago dei*. The Medieval Catholic and Reformed conceptions of the image of God differ, therefore, in that for the Reformers the image of God consists in the actual relation to God, while for medieval Latin Scholasticism it is, rather, a presupposition for this actual relation to God and is a formal structural property of human nature, somewhat as the “remnant of the image” is for Brunner. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 48, citing Luther, WA 42:46: “The likeness and image of God consists in the true and perfect knowledge of God, supreme delight in God, eternal life, eternal righteousness, eternal freedom from care.” Melancthon, *Apol.* II, 18. In the *Formula of Concord* the original justice, that is, the actual relation to God, is identified with the image of God; see *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. T.G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 510.

¹²⁸ E. Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, 94. Pannenberg points out that this difference also explains the dispute in our own century between Karl Barth and E. Brunner on the question of whether the image of God was completely lost in the fall or whether as Brunner claimed a “remnant” was left which consists in human rationality and the capacity for being addressed by God, for in these Brunner sees summed up the distinctive formal human characteristic that perdures [sic] even after the fall, although affected by some degree of material corruption. Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, 49. See also E. Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, 172-173.

¹²⁹ *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration*, I, 10.

Satan.¹³⁰ Therefore, the human is both wholly a creature of God while at the same time wholly corrupt.¹³¹

The notion of *simil justus et peccator* (justified and sinner at the same time) that Luther heralds aptly describes the tension of living as *imago Dei* (justified by faith) while cognizant of the sinful condition. The positive corollary to this dialectic incorporates the notion of the fallen sinner/saint who attains the righteousness of God by grace through faith in Christ. This restored relationship with God affects the whole person and includes those elements that constitute and affirm human being and human dignity such as culture, gender, language, moral agency, and any other which give rise to human identity and expression as creation of God. In other words, this restoration includes the totality of the person in all of her varied expressions.

Luther's theology of justification by faith affirms the restored relationship with God and the inherent human dignity of the person as a valued expression of the creation of God, but this aspect of Luther's theology will be examined further in a later chapter together with the experience and insights of the marginalized of the human family. For now we will examine the perspective of a community whose voice has been absent from the annals of theological review in light of contemporary Lutheran interpretations.

The Modern Period

¹³⁰ Ibid., I, 54.

¹³¹ This dialectical antithesis between creature and corruption is not parallel when the Confessions speak of the loss of the image. Here the human is not in any sense image of God and not image

Contemporary theologians such as Elaine Pagels offer constructive reinterpretations of the *imago Dei* that retrieve the patristic notion of human dignity that characterized the view of the early church. Based on her study of the apologists and their interpretation of the Genesis texts, Pagels provides the following insight:

Many Christians were themselves slave owners and took slavery for granted as unthinkingly as their pagan neighbors. But others went among the hovels of the poor and into slave quarters, offering help and money and preaching to the poor, the illiterate, slaves, women, and foreigners – the good news that class, education, sex, and status made no difference, that every human being is essentially equal to any other “before God,” including the emperor himself, for all humankind was created in the image of the one God.¹³²

Further, it was this sense of moral equality that outraged the pagans:

Everyone must be outraged – or, rather, grieved – that certain people, uneducated, illiterate, and ignorant, dare to claim certainty concerning nature itself, and the divine being.¹³³

This idea of human equality made the Christian movement very attractive during the first centuries. Because everyone shared in this equality of freedom, including women, those who were marginal in the Greco-Roman world found the message of the gospel compelling. As creation in the *imago Dei* the oppressed experienced the human freedom that was suppressed by the structures of oppression.¹³⁴ The new identity was indeed “good news” in a society that ranked each person within a social hierarchy according to class, family, wealth,

of God simultaneously. See Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J.A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961), 47.

¹³² Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, 52.

¹³³ Ibid. See also, Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 30.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 55.

education, sex, and status.¹³⁵ Pagels' study of this early history recovers that early sense of human dignity that was so affirming for the early Christians but that was lost with the influence of Augustine and the tradition that developed after him.

Other feminist theologians reject the notion of the duality of the human nature inherited from Greek philosophical concepts that led to a devaluation of the body and the subordination of women. Mary Catherine Hilbert indicates that a contemporary retrieval of the symbol of *imago Dei* rejects the Platonic-Cartesian split of body and soul: "Our body is not something we have: rather, we are body self."¹³⁶ As feminist ethicist Beverly Harrison describes it, our body-self is "the integrated locus of our being-in-the world. We are related to everything through our body-selves."¹³⁷ This understanding calls for right relations with all of creation and with God who communicated with the creature most fully in and through the *incarnate* Word. This claim is at the heart of any incarnational or sacramental theology that affirms that God became fully human in Jesus Christ.

Catherine LaCugna, Walter Kasper, Jurgen Moltmann, and others argue that the very essence of God is "to-be-in-relation," which calls for a rethinking not only of the human person and social relationships but of all reality.¹³⁸ At the

¹³⁵ Ibid. 51.

¹³⁶ Mary Catherine Hilbert, "Cry Beloved Image: Rethinking the Image of God," *In The Embrace Of God*, 197.

¹³⁷ Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion* (Boston: Beacon 1983), 106. See also, Mary Catherine Hilbert, "Cry Beloved Image," *In the Embrace of God*, 197.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 200.

heart of reality are relationship, personhood, and communion. Given this trinitarian perspective, a new emphasis emerges. While the dignity of every human being needs to be respected and protected, human persons do not image God primarily as individuals, but rather in "right relationship" with one another. Communities characterized by equality, respect for difference and uniqueness, and mutual love reflect this image of God most clearly.

The symbol of the *imago Dei* also gives rise to justice. As Lisa Cahill has noted, "image of God" is "the primary Christian category or symbol of interpretation of personal value."¹³⁹ The Christian teaching that human persons are created in the image of God and endowed with fundamental human dignity has been central to prophetic preaching and the church's defense of basic human rights. As David Tracy has remarked:

Christians continue to believe that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. They have become far more sensitive, however, to the fact that this theological indicative, in the present world, must also function as an imperative. The task of human beings, on this newer reading, is to actualize what they are potentially, and to actualize that reality in the struggle for a not-yet acknowledged dignity of every human person: for the need, in sum for human rights in their full social, economic, cultural, political, civic, and religious dimensions.¹⁴⁰

Mary Catherine Hilkert conveys this initiative arguing that like the basic anthropological symbol *imago Dei*, the explicitly Christian anthropological symbol *imago Christi* grounds our identity and points to our destiny and our vocation:

¹³⁹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Toward a Christian Theory of Human Rights," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 8 (1980): 279. See also, Hilkert, "Cry Beloved Image," *In the Embrace of God*, 194.

¹⁴⁰ David Tracy, "Religion and Human Rights in the Public Realm," *Daedalus* 112 (1983): 248.

Created in the image of God and baptized into the image of Christ, we have been given an inviolable dignity and an irreversible mandate. Every human person is endowed with *radical* dignity, every aspect of humanity as created by God shares in the human potential to image the divine. As fundamentally social and relational beings, we image God most profoundly when our human relationships, our families and communities, and our social, political, economic, and ecclesiastical structures reflect the equality, mutuality, and love that are essential to the trinitarian God revealed in Jesus Christ and in communities living in the power of the Spirit (emphasis mine).¹⁴¹

Lutheran theologian Dorothee Soelle argues that human liberation is intrinsic to the *imago Dei*.¹⁴² This idea resonates with oppressed groups whose dignity has been denied in the course of history. As *imago Dei* one imitates God in doing justice.¹⁴³ The work of justice requires human agency and entails participation with God who is power-in-relation with the empowered creation. Thus, the creature is a co-creator with God in the ontological and historical projects of human liberation.¹⁴⁴

Philip Hefner affirms the idea of co-creatorship with God and argues that as co-responding, co-creating creatures of God humans share in the dynamic unfolding of the universe: "Human freedom did not spring full blown from Zeus's head, but emerged in a process that extends far back into prehuman physical nature. That same nature can be said to share in the image of God."¹⁴⁵ As a

¹⁴¹ Hilkert, "Cry Beloved Image," *In the Embrace of God*, 202.

¹⁴² Soelle and Cloyes, *To Work And To Love*, 10.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 43-45.

¹⁴⁵ Philip Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 239, 273-5.

created co-creator the human being has a destiny and a vocation. These find expression in the Christian faith through the interplay of works and grace, morality, function, and praxis.¹⁴⁶

Vitor Westhelle offers a Lutheran perspective from the social context of the poor and powerless of Latin America. Westhelle interprets the *imago Dei* as a praxis of love, which was the work of the Christ and his disciples. He maintains that the poor and the powerless of history cannot affirm their creation (of themselves or of the world around them) when they are searching for food in city dumps. To be created in the image of God is to participate in affirming the dignity of those who do not have a vital space to exist.¹⁴⁷ Thus the *imago Dei* entails a justice praxis component that reflects the nature of God. James Childs offers a similar insight when he addresses the ethical implications of living in that place between historical being and ultimate destiny in Christ. For Childs, the human being is an ethical agent whose imperative is love.¹⁴⁸

From the Hispanic/*Latina* perspective Ada María Isasi-Díaz points out that Hispanic women are *imago Dei* insofar as they struggle for the common good of the community; that is, for their liberation from oppression.¹⁴⁹ The struggle (*lucha*) is what it means to be fully human. It is a willingness to be in relationship

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 273.

¹⁴⁷ Vitor Westhelle, "Creation Motifs in the Search for a Vital Space: A Latin American Perspective," *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, ed. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 128-40.

¹⁴⁸ Childs, "The Imago Dei and Eschatology," 360.

¹⁴⁹ Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 5. See also Isasi-Díaz, "Elements of a Mujerista Anthropology," *In The Embrace of God*, 90-101.

with others through a commitment to justice, truth, and love. It is a praxis-in-love concept that finds embodiment in the life experience of oppressed Latina women. The *imago Dei* is thus conceived as a *kin-dom* model, a praxis of justice concept that invites solidarity with those who struggle for justice in their communities. The concept connotes moral agency, the idea that the oppressed of history are historical subjects with a historical project to accomplish, their liberation from oppression.

Ismael García indicates that for Hispanics the term "God's image" has several meanings. First, it means human rationality or the capacity to think and communicate in universal categories. This point is critical because the conquest of the Americas was justified by denying the subjugated their human dignity and participation in the *logos* of God.¹⁵⁰ Second, it means human freedom and the capacity to create and sustain culture through work. Third, it means the human capacity for infinite self-transcendence. Fourth, it means the capacity to care and serve others. To be created in God's likeness reflects the relational nature of human life. This reflects the relational nature of God's inner being and God's relation to the world. Because Hispanics are created by God who makes them partners in the realization of God's purpose for creation, Hispanics have their

¹⁵⁰ Justo González finds it interesting that in the history of missionary and colonial expansion the universal *logos* was not seen to exist in the "savages" of Africa and the New World. These foreigners, showing no signs of the *logos*, were considered inferior beings, who did not truly own their land and who could be legitimately dispossessed and enslaved. He points out that the doctrine was applied inconsistently in order to justify the oppression and exploitation of supposedly inferior peoples and cultures. This has been the experience of the Hispanic/Latina community in the United States. See González, *Mañana*, 104; idem, *Out of Every Tribe and Nation*, 44; Leon Lopetegui and Félix Zubillaga, *Historia de la Iglesia en America Española: Desde el descubrimiento hasta comienzos del siglo XIX*, vol. 1, México. *América Central. Antillas* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1955), 100. For an excellent discussion of this history from the perspective of the Mexican-American community in the Southwest see Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey*, 7-31, and González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 2, 246-50.

own dignity expressed in unique ways.¹⁵¹ Their dignity is an irrevocable *gift of God* by virtue of their creation.¹⁵²

For Justo González, creation in the image and likeness of God means the exercise of the creative power and love of God after whom we have been created.¹⁵³ As love, God's nature is being-for-others. To be fully human is to be for others in a praxis of love and care. Sin violates that for-otherness and causes 'the denial of human dignity. The oppressed of history are particularly conscious of being sinned against in their experience of dehumanization which takes the form of wrongful dominance.

SUMMARY

The retrieval of the concept of human dignity from the early church tradition leads to a reexamination of the *imago Dei* from the perspective of the marginalized Hispanic/Latina community in the United States. The early church tradition construed the *imago Dei* as an inclusive concept that affirmed the human worth, dignity and nobility of all persons and of the marginalized in particular. This interpretation of the doctrine was "good news" for the conquered and enslaved people of the Roman Empire. All marginalized people – women, children, slaves, and foreigners – were esteemed as members of the human family. They were valued as part of the good creation of God. Feminist theologians and members of the diverse Hispanic/Latina theological community

¹⁵¹ García, *Dignidad*, 130-31.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁵³ González, *Mañana*,. 131-8.

recover this perspective for the church in their quest to affirm their own unique creation in the image and likeness of God.¹⁵⁴

Hispanics/Latinas view themselves as a people graced and empowered by a dignity that is a gift of God and affirmed in their conceptions of the *imago Dei*. Hispanics/Latinas comprise a large segment of the immigrant population of this country and are the marginal members of both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic traditions.¹⁵⁵ This community is particularly cognizant of its marginal and foreign status in both the church and society. This is especially true of those members of the community who were native to the American Southwest when the land belonged to México but who became foreigners in their own land as a result of the conquest by the United States during the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848.

As a Latino Lutheran who belongs to this immigrant community, I affirm the relevance of the *imago Dei* construct as most Hispanic/Latina theologians and others have interpreted it in light of the historical experience of marginality and devaluation of human worth which has been characteristic of the community.

¹⁵⁴ The attempt of this first chapter has been to try to capture this panorama of emerging voices that speak to the human quest for affirmation in light of the experience and encounter of God. These voices offer critical insight and nuances of the image of God that reveal that the concept is not static or confined to the historical formulations of their traditions but is fluid as a live organism that seeks to express itself in new, creative, inclusive, and life-affirming ways.

¹⁵⁵ Both Hispanic/Latina Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians are engaged in a process of critical reflection of their denominational heritage from the perspective of the margins; that is, from the point of view of those members of the community who have traditionally not been a part of the theological roundtable. In the process they have discovered their common cultural and religious roots as the *mestizo* (mixed; hybrid) heirs of conquest and as members of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. In this way the community has transcended the historical and theological divide that marked the history of the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions since the Reformation. Members of both traditions have contributed to the self-understanding of the community by engaging the theological task in a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding

The recovery and reinterpretation of the construct with dignity as its vital center addresses such challenges as injustice in human relations. Hispanic/Latina theologians argue that our dignity is an inherent ontological value that is expressed in diverse ways in the community and that our dignity is violated when Latinos/as are forced to assimilate and to accept the values of the dominant culture. This forced assimilation violates the conscience; that is, it violates our unique creation in freedom as a reflection of the *imago Dei*.¹⁵⁶ This violation of our dignity is an affront to God because it denies the creative presence of the *imago Dei* and the goodness of our creation.¹⁵⁷ To advocate for our dignity is to join the struggle for justice for the widows, the orphans, the poor and the strangers (Exodus 22:21-25). The Gospel imperative of Matthew 25:35-40 mandates this response.¹⁵⁸

A jarring dissonance results when both the secular and church cultures treat Hispanics/Latinas and other marginal groups as second-class citizens, or as non-persons.¹⁵⁹ This experience is not uncommon in the church. It is well documented by various sources that have aimed at resisting the tendency of the

that is contributing to the affirmation of the marginalized community within the church catholic. See González, *Mañana*, 9-20.

¹⁵⁶ The theologians of the patristic period contributed to the understanding of this essential and fundamental aspect of human being. See González, *Mañana*, 134.

¹⁵⁷ This is a position consistent with the exegetical analysis and understanding of Westermann. He indicates that the goodness of creation is based solely on God's authority; what it is good for, such as it is, only God knows. Westermann, *Genesis*, 11.

¹⁵⁸ This is a perspective that is similar to the one held by the early church. The reversal of values and praxis of the early church movement contradicted the practices and assumptions of the Roman Empire concerning human being and human community. This reversal and praxis was a subversive force within the empire. See González, *Mañana*, 134-8; Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, 32-56.

church towards ethnocentrism and racism.¹⁶⁰ Revisiting the construct of the *imago Dei* from the perspective of the marginalized Hispanic/Latina community raises theological awareness of the limitations of traditional understandings of the construct. Their voice and experience of human being and community are missing from the tradition and required for a more inclusive interpretation.

The view from the margins affirms the goodness of creation that is celebrated by the marginal members of the community in their religious practices.¹⁶¹ Examining the construct from the marginal perspective of the church raises awareness of the biblical injunction to love the stranger who is often different: "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the stranger. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34).¹⁶²

The stranger in our contemporary world is often the neighbor who is a recent or not-so-recent immigrant who speaks and worships in a different language.¹⁶³ This experience is reflective of a North American culture that finds

¹⁵⁹ Virgilio Elizondo, *The Future is Mestizo*, 20-1.

¹⁶⁰ James Bennett, "From the Bishop," *The Vista: A Publication of the Southwestern Texas Synod*, 2. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has produced various documents to combat the evil of racism within the church and in 1988 set a goal for the church for a 10% membership by people of color by 1998. This goal was not met.

¹⁶¹ Aponte, "Coritos." This is the subject of research on the popular religious practices within the Lutheran Hispanic/Latina community. The theological analysis of this research will be the subject of the second chapter on popular religion as an expression of the *imago Dei*.

¹⁶² The text uses the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation except that it substitutes the Revised Standard translation "stranger" for the NRSV "alien."

¹⁶³ See Aponte, "Coritos." The Hispanic/Latina community within the Lutheran tradition now uses the Spanish hymnal, *El Libro de Liturgia y Cántico*, as a way to affirm and recapture the historic

itself increasingly pluralistic yet resistant to any image of humanity and of God that does not conform to the dominant cultural and theological norm. This reality presents a challenge to both the universal church and the secular culture as both groups strive to understand the implications of this diversity.¹⁶⁴ From the marginalized Lutheran perspective the foreigner is already located within the hallowed walls of the church. She is seeking expression and affirmation of identity as a valued member of the human family. Popular religion expresses the image of God as a way to affirm the community. The next chapter will discuss popular religion as an epistemological source for the expression and affirmation of identity.

The theologians selected for each of these periods concretely crystallized the relevant issues that I wanted to raise in this dissertation. They also revealed how the interpretation of the doctrine changed over time leading to a diminution of that aspect of the doctrine that gave it its initial dynamic and life-affirming force. During the early church period the church was a marginal and persecuted Hebrew and Gentile community comprised of the lower socio-economic rung of the Roman Empire. To be created in the image of God was a life-affirming and life-empowering notion for the early Christian community. Their confession refuted the notion of the divine origin of the emperor and of his exclusive claim to that status. It also affirmed the intrinsic value of the marginalized Christian

hymnody of the people. The hymnal is in the language of the people and incorporates the popular songs of praise and worship that reflect the image of God as experienced in the life of the community.

¹⁶⁴ Justo González addresses some of the implications for the church in his discussion of the reformation of the twentieth century in *Mañana*, 43.

community.¹⁶⁵ Contemporary theologians such as Elaine Pagels and the members of the Hispanic/Latina Roman Catholic and Protestant community retrieve this aspect of the doctrine to argue for the inherent dignity, moral agency, and historical project of the marginalized of history.

Since my theological lens is Lutheran I examined Martin Luther's interpretation of the construct. Luther reinterpreted the "construct" in contradistinction to the prevailing understanding of the medieval church as influenced by Thomas Aquinas. Luther challenged the scholastic anthropological and theological notions of human duality and infused grace. He thereby set the stage for a more Augustinian reinterpretation of the doctrine with an emphasis on the human being as a single entity who is in relationship to God by grace and not by works. This reinterpretation allowed Luther to interpret the doctrine of justification by grace through faith as the doctrine that provides the saving grace for the human condition. It is this central Reformation doctrine that Lutheran scholars have described as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*; that is, the article by which the Church stands or falls. I will examine the reinterpretation of this doctrine in chapter four in light of contemporary understandings of the human by the marginal community.

Because of the scant nature of Hispanic/Latina Lutheran research on this subject, I consulted Hispanic/Latina theologians from other theological traditions as vital sources for identity and moral agency. This consultation reflects the

¹⁶⁵ The Hebrew creation account of Genesis I, unlike its Babylonian counterpart, claims that God gave the power of earthly rule to *adam*—not to the king or emperor but simply to "mankind" (and some even thought this might include women). See *Vita Adae et Evae* 22.1-2 and *Jubilees* 2:14 cited in Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, 98. See also Jervell, *Imago Dei*, 40-1.

spirit of *teología en conjunto*,¹⁶⁶ that is, a theological understanding and interpretation that considers the diverse voices of the Hispanic/Latina community. It is from this perspective that I as a Latino Lutheran will argue the case for a more inclusive and holistic reinterpretation of the doctrines of the *imago Dei* and justification by faith that takes into account the voices of the marginalized and their experience of God in their struggle for liberation and human dignity.

¹⁶⁶ See *Teología en Conjunto: A Collaborative Hispanic Protestant Theology*, ed. José David Rodríguez, Jr. and Loida I. Martell-Otero (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 1. Rodríguez and Martell-Otero indicate that "this particular method of doing theology is very characteristic of Hispanic American theology and is what we call in Spanish *teología en conjunto*. Literally, *en conjunto* means "in conjunction," or "conjoined in," implying not only the coming together but also the integration and intimacy involved in such a sharing. It is reminiscent of the human body, whose various joints, tendons, muscles, and bones must be conjoined in order for it to function in an adequate way."