2023

Divine Attachment: A Canonical Model for Discipleship and Religious Education

Kristina Marie Freed

ABSTRACT

DIVINE ATTACHMENT: A CANONICAL MODEL FOR

DISCIPLESHIP AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

by

Kristina Marie Freed

Advisor: David Sedlacek

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DIVINE ATTACHMENT: A CANONICAL MODEL FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Name of researcher: Kristina Marie Freed

Name and degree of faculty advisor: David Sedlacek, PhD

Date completed: July 10, 2023

Problem

Christianity is in decline in the United States and, with it, discipleship engagement. While several explanations and many remedies have been offered as solutions to the problem over the last half-century, demographic research shows that the decline continues. The problem addressed in this dissertation is the lack of a theological model to augment psychological models of religious attachment theory. The research sought to identify a canonical model of divine attachment which may contribute to the revitalization of personal discipleship and religious education by offering a new relational context. This model is based on an understanding of God as an attachment figure.

Method

Because God is not visible to humans and therefore unobservable, demonstrations of divine attachment behavior were sought by examining direct divine utterance through an inductive reading of Scripture. Ample evidence was collected that God self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as providing the two attachment caregiving behaviors reasonably expected of attachment figures: a secure base and a safe haven.

Results

This study shows from a theological perspective that does God self-reveal in ways that may be interpreted as engaging in attachment caregiving behaviors. Additionally, the canonical data revealed that God also self-identifies in ways that may be interpreted as attachment-seeking behaviors.

Conclusions

Attachment theory provides a relational context that has been recognized for its applicability to religion and religious expression. The idea that God is a sufficient attachment figure is supported in the literature; however, that support is based on subjective perceptions. This research contributes to the literature and expands the understanding of God as an attachment figure by providing an intersubjective theological model based on evidence found in the biblical canon: God self-reveals in way that may be interpreted as engaging in attachment caregiving *and* attachment seeking behaviors. The God of the canonical model of divine attachment is an incredibly relational God seeking reciprocated connection with humans.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

DIVINE ATTACHMENT: A CANONICAL MODEL FOR

DISCIPLESHIP AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Kristina Marie Freed

July 10, 2023

DIVINE ATTACHMENT: A CANONICAL MODEL FOR

DISCIPLESHIP AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Kristina Marie Freed

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE

_____   _____
Faculty Adviser: David Sedlacek   Director, PhD Discipleship in
Professor of Discipleship and   Lifespan Education
Family Life   Jasmine Fraser

_____   _____
John V. G. Matthews   Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Senior Research Professor of Educational   Jiří Moskala
Foundations and Religious Education

_____
John Peckham
Research Professor of Theology and
Christian Philosophy

_____
Desiree E. Davis
Associate Professor of Social Work

_____   _____
Curtis Fox   Date Approved
CEO & Director of Clinical Services
TRU Integrative Health & Wellness

DEDICATION

To my husband, Darren and to our three sons, Brendan, Ian, and Ronan

Thank you for giving me the time and space away from home to accomplish this work, and for listening patiently to every new breakthrough, helping me consolidate my grand ideas, and telling me when I needed to take breaks.

May you always remember that God is a much better attachment figure than I am.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

2. (Continued)

Chapter

5. (Continued)

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND PREVIEW

Introduction

Christianity is in decline in the United States. While several explanations and

many remedies have been offered over the last half-century, demographic research shows

that the decline continues. Rather than contributing more to existing efforts to confront

the challenge, this dissertation will examine the matter from a new angle by proposing a

canonical model of divine attachment for relational discipleship and religious education.

Background

Based on the Latin words *religio* and *religare[1],* the term *religion* in a theistic

context denotes a bond between a believer and a supernatural being. In Christianity, this

bond is meant to be relational and bi-directional, with both God and humans contributing

to its maintenance. However, while the divine contribution remains constant, variability

in the human experience has placed this bond under strain, and—as observed most

dramatically in Western Christianity—the faith is experiencing decline (Pew Research

Center, 2011, p. 10).

---

[1] The noun *religio* means an obligation to the gods, reverence shown to the gods, a bond between men and gods. The verb *religare* means to re-bind. Taken together, these two words can be understood as referring to the re-bonding of the human with the divine.

In the United States, in particular, church membership fell below a majority for the first time in 2020 (Jones, 2021). Fewer Christians attend worship services and participate in discipleship endeavors (Barna Group, 2015, p. 10). Pew Research Center (2019, p. 22), based on their Religious Landscape Studies conducted in 2007 and 2014 and updated in 2019, has identified a trend toward "religious disaffiliation" that continues. They have also discovered that the number of Christians in the United States—Protestant and Catholic—is declining as a share of the population and in absolute number. At the same time, the number of those who identify with other faiths and those who claim no religious affiliation is rising (Pew Research Center, 2019, p. 10; see also Burge, 2021).

The volume of discipleship literature has grown exponentially over the past few decades as thought leaders have identified problems including biblical illiteracy and high levels of dependence on clergy (O'Sullivan, 1988), spiritual immaturity (Warren, 2010), being self-absorbed (Putman, 2010), expecting instant change instead of engaging in long-term commitment (Im, 2017), and the belief that simply appropriating biblical knowledge will lead to spiritual growth (Hall & Hall, 2021). In addition, many other authors have sought to address how to master the discipleship process and lifestyle (Andrews, 2010; Hull, 2006), live like Jesus (Petersen, 2007), be a good disciple-maker (Watson & Watson, 2014), and build churches that successfully make other disciples (Putman, 2010). Other areas of focus have included Christian apologetics (Keller, 2008; Roels, 2021), the authority of Scripture (Wright, 2005), what distinguishes Christianity from other faiths (Stott, 2008), how to develop a biblical worldview (Hiebert, 2008; Noebel, 2006; Sire, 2020); spiritual transformation (Comiskey, 2020; Scazerro, 2021;

Willard & Simpson, 2005), life management (Cloud & Townsend, 1992), and the importance of relationships (Hall & Hall, 2021; Harrington & Absalom, 2016).

Because of legitimate concerns relating to the diminishing effectiveness of discipleship practices, it seems appropriate to reconsider those practices. Attachment theory is an avenue of enquiry that may provide new and beneficial insights relating to discipleship and religious education. Attachment theory, the intergenerational biosocial bonding system, was first postulated by John Bowlby as an alternative to then-current psychoanalytic explanations of a child's tie to its mother that could account for how the child responded to separation and reunion with her (Bowlby, 1958). He defined children's attachment behavior as "any form of behavior that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived of as better able to cope with the world" (Bowlby, 1988, pp. 26-27). Attachment-seeking behaviors are categorized as seeking proximity and displaying separation anxiety; caregiving by the attachment figure is characterized by providing the child a secure base from which to explore and a safe haven to return to in times of distress (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Together, these four behaviors characterize attachment.

While volunteering at a children's institution Bowlby (1969/1982) observed pathological behaviors of children separated from or deprived of their mothers due to World War II, categorizing those behavioral responses as protest, despair, and detachment (p. 27). Mary Ainsworth, who began her studies in security theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991), continued her studies under Bowlby's direction. With her *Strange Situation* procedure, she expanded his theory and confirmed the two normative attachment caregiving behaviors: secure base and safe haven. Under this research

protocol, Ainsworth and her team briefly separated children from their mothers and observed their behavioral responses after their mothers returned (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Those behavioral reactions were classified in terms of security theory: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969/1982, pp. 336-337). One of Ainsworth's students, Mary Main, collaborated with Judith Solomon and identified a fourth classification: disorganized (Main & Solomon, 1990).

While these characterizations were initially applied only to the infant-caregiver relationship, Bowlby's (1988) continued observations led him to conclude that attachment is a lifespan experience (p.27). As they interact with caregivers, children, as attachment seekers, begin to recognize (even if subconsciously) patterns in the interactions and organize them into a system of mental representations of themselves and others. These internal working models (IWMs) form the basis of expectations regarding how future relationships will work (Bowlby, 1973). The quality of future attachment relationships depends on the history of interactions between the attachment seeker and the early caregiver and the degree to which an attachment seeker depends on the caregiver for security and comfort (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1988). Secure attachment is achieved when an available and responsive attachment figure meets attachment needs and is acknowledged as having done so in an atmosphere characterized by love, approval, closeness, security, and warmth (Bowlby, 1997). Secure attachment contributes to healthy IWMs. However, if the history of interactions is fraught with inconsistency and unreliability, the attachment process is disrupted, resulting in insecure attachment and unhealthy IWMs. Empirical research has found that insecure attachments also predispose individuals to psychological distress (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012; Pielage et al., 2000).

Not only have psychologists observed that attachment patterns are transmitted from generation to generation in harmony with Bowlby's lifespan observation (Main et al., 1985; Ricks, 1985), but they have also recognized that attachment relationships include friendships (Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Saferstein et al., 2005) and romantic relationships (Beck & Madresh, 2008; Feeney, 2016; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). Subsequent research has confirmed Bowlby's belief and affirmed Ainsworth's work, empirically extending lifespan attachment to include workplace mentoring relationships (Yip et al., 2018), coach-athlete relationships (Cogburn et al., 2017; Felton & Jowett, 2013), group processes (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003), psychotherapeutic relations (Mallinckrodt, 2000), street gangs (De Vito, 2020), pets (Sable, 1995), religious memberships (Freeze, 2017), and, most important to this study, the relationship between a believer and God (Freeze, 2017; Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick, 2005, 2012; Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Knabb & Pelletier, 2014; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Saferstein et al., 2005; Thompson, 2010). The quality of each of these attachment relationships depends on IWMs formulated in early life.

Beyond the boundaries of the psychology of religion, theologian Gordon Kaufman (1981) wrote that attachment was not merely "an optional or morally desirable characteristic" but "an indispensable and ineradicable characteristic of our human nature" (p. 58). He also noted that God is "an absolutely adequate attachment-figure [*sic*]" (p. 67). Both observations have made the study of religion as an attachment/bonding process another natural progression of Bowlby's work. Lee Kirkpatrick (1992, 1994, 2005) embedded these ideas in his formative psychology of religion (see also Kirkpatrick &

5

Shaver, 1990) and went on to suggest that the experience of God as an attachment figure should give rise to the same kinds of feelings of comfort and security experienced in secure human attachment relationships. Based on this idea, Kirkpatrick (1992) hypothesized two models of divine attachment that develop out of IWMs: compensation and correspondence. The correspondence model holds that an individual's orientation toward God as an attachment figure corresponds to their secure parental or caregiver attachment experience. The compensation model asserts that an individual's orientation toward God as an attachment figure compensates for insecure attachment experiences with parents or caregivers. Both models, based upon projections of human attachment relationships, have been validated by several researchers (Davis et al., 2013; Granqvist, 1998; Granqvist et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2009; Zarzycka, 2019). However, from a theological perspective, these models appear to limit the quality of an individual's divine attachment to their early attachment experiences. If Kaufman (1981) was correct in asserting that the perfect and sinless God is the ultimate attachment figure, it is theoretically possible that the quality of divine attachment, while influenced by human attachments, does not have to remain subject to them.

From the perspectives of the psychology of religion and theology, attachment is not an empty research term but rather is indicative of a certain quality of close relationship characterized by feelings of peace, security, and comfort between attachment seekers and providers built upon healthy IWMs. Without healthy IWMs, the context for secure, healthy relationships is missing. This conclusion is supported by discipleship author Jim Putman (2010, p. 22) who notes that "without relationship between believers, there is no model to follow, no authenticity, no accountability, no application, and no

support for the journey" (p. 22). He goes on to state that "the relational context for learning is lacking" (p. 23). Without secure, healthy relationships, community suffers. When religious community suffers, the Church and all its ministries suffer. If the Church and its ministries suffer from a lack of healthy relationships, so also does the divine-human relationship, for, as Kaufman (1981) stated, "attachment to God can never really be separated from our attachments to other persons" (p. 78). Therefore, the lack of relational context in discipleship could be understood as a lack of attachment relationships between believers and between believers and God.

The lack of attachment relationships is not the only factor contributing to the decline of Christian discipleship. A growing body of research has identified another discrepancy of related and significant attachment importance: Christians' God representations. Experiential/affective images of God (God images) do not match conceptual/cognitive knowledge (God concepts). Zahl and Gibson (2012) have found that Christians' God images are not as positive as their God concepts and that their affective knowledge of him is exceeded by the cognitive. In other words, what they have been taught about God does not match their experiences. In clinical settings, Kam (2018) found that many struggling Christians have experienced God as "mean, distant, harsh, or cold to them" (p. 341). Empirical studies have linked clients' negative God images with psychological distress and experiences of divine struggle (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Ellison et al., 2012; Exline et al., 2015). Other clinical and empirical data have positively correlated attachment to relational functioning in faith-based small groups (Knabb & Pelletier, 2014; Thompson, 2021). These findings indicate that God representations, as indications of believers' IWMs of God as an attachment

figure and the quality of attachment care he provides, should be considered when seeking to address the state of discipleship.

Though honorable and even successful in some contexts, previous efforts to improve the state of discipleship have not considered a more fundamental issue. If Thomas Aquinas and John Peckham are correct in asserting that "a slight error eventually grows to vast proportions" (Aquinas, 1949, p. 27), and that "the theological path you set out on depends a great deal on your concept of God and how God relates to his creation" (Peckham, 2019, p. 1), then it may be reasonably surmised that some of the current difficulties within Christian discipleship are related to unhealthy IWMs—insecure divine attachment—deployed at the beginning of the discipleship journey. "An accurate picture of [God's] character is more likely to draw people to respond to his passionate love" (Peckham, 2015, pp. 157, footnote). Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

Christian Scripture declares that God is love (1 John 4:8). Saribay and Anderson (2007) have suggested that the nature of love one feels in a relationship is the key influence on the quality of outcomes of the attachment process. Just as the quality of parental love and attachment caregiving felt by children influences children's IWMs of future human attachment relationships, it also influences children's conceptualizations of God as an attachment caregiver. Nineteenth-century religious author Ellen White presciently wrote that "parents stand in the place of God to their children" in their early years (White, 1854, pp. 45; see also Bushnell, 1861/1991). It has since been observed that parents who are loving and affectionate contribute to the development of positive personal God images in their children (Hui-Tzu & Uata, 2012; Potvin, 1977). Conversely,

parental behavior may also contribute to negative God images: "The more the adolescent sees his parents as exercising control over his life the more he or she tends to see God as punishing" (Potvin, 1977, p. 51). Blatt and Auerbach (2000) identified that "secure attachment appears to involve more stable, consistent, positive, and integrated representations of others" (p. 439).

While the existing psychological models of divine attachment may be sufficiently explanatory for early discipleship experiences, a theological model will provide a framework for later experiences. Combined with the canonical model of divine love, which presents a God who loves humans, takes delight in them, wants to relieve their suffering, and desires a reciprocal (though asymmetrical) relationship with them, this proposed model of divine attachment will suggest that because of his sinless nature, God's qualities as an attachment figure exceed the representations that can be made by human models and therefore should be considered independently of those human models and strictly on their own merits. Approaching divine attachment from this perspective makes divine attachment security, in and of itself, salient, and "when attachment security is made salient, it presumably not only creates some specific sense of secure interpersonal attachment, it creates a sense of security, period" (Schaller, 2007, p. 191). The sense of security provided through an experiential understanding of a theological model of divine attachment could well prove to be an essential element in improving discipleship and religious education experiences.

A new perspective on discipleship and religious education begs to be explored, with the hope that this endeavor will provide insights that promote secure divine

attachment and provide a healthy relational context for discipleship in which

transformation and growth in Christlikeness flourish.

Statement of the Problem

The concept of God as an attachment figure has gained traction in the psychology

of religion but has yet to do so in theology and discipleship. Existing models of divine

attachment are approached from the psychology of religion perspective and are

predicated on internal working models (IWMs) of human attachment relationships. The

problem addressed in this dissertation was the identification of a canonical model of

divine attachment, based on an appropriate and supportive theology, which may

contribute to the revitalization of personal and corporate discipleship and religious

education based not upon human IWMs but upon divine IWMs informed by canonical

data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this dissertation was to suggest a canonical model of divine

attachment for discipleship and religious education. It examines canonical data for God

as an attachment figure and describes the nature and quality of his attachment caregiving.

Finally, an attempt is made to integrate the findings with the extant psychological models

of divine attachment to provide a new perspective that enhances discipleship and

religious education efforts.

Scope and Delimitations

It is beyond the scope of this research project to engage in a comprehensive study

of the bodies of literature related to the different theologies that inform belief in God as

an attachment figure, or attachment theory in general. Accordingly, only a brief survey of the major theologies of divine love was conducted to identify a model that can rationally support a model of divine attachment.

The examination of texts is limited to the biblical canon and, within that framework, limited to obvious instances of God's self-revelation of characteristics and qualities he possesses that are descriptive of the characteristics reasonably expected to be possessed by an attachment figure. Divine utterance was interpreted theopathically rather than anthropopathically, allowing for the interpretation of rational and appropriate expression of emotions without, as far as possible, the interference of human irrationality.

Methodology

Theological Framework

The examination and review of the canonical data was conducted using the final-form canonical methodology developed by John Peckham (2016). The three major commitments required by this method harmonize with the researcher's intent: (a) It is a distinctive methodology that begins with canon rather than with the privileging of philosophical presuppositions, avoiding as far as possible the (un)intentional ideological bias of numerous other methods; (b) It accepts the biblical canon's own claims of internal coherence and therefore allows the reader to seek harmony among all texts without injury to any; and (c) The researcher, as a limited and fallible qualitative instrument, is tasked with the goal not of perfect correspondence to canon but a "discernable, demonstrable, and defensible" correspondence (Peckham, 2016, p. 209).

Plan of Study

After analyzing existing models of divine love for fitness of purpose to determine which, if any, is appropriately supportive for a canonically-derived model of divine attachment, this project explored the existing divine attachment literature to identify reasons for the need of a canonical theological model. Following this identification, God's self-revealing utterances were examined to distinguish which utterances reveal that he possesses qualities of an attachment figure and what such utterances reveal about his attachment behavior. The collected data were then compiled and described according to the two characteristics of attachment figures: a secure base and a safe haven. The results were contrasted with the existing psychology of religion models of divine attachment that derive from philosophical theology and the psychology of religion, with the intent of providing a novel theological perspective. Finally, the findings were summarized for consideration as a new faith-formational perspective to potentially contribute to the transformation of current discipleship and religious education practices.

Research Questions

There are two primary research questions. The second question is contingent upon the first.

1. Is there any evidence in the biblical canon of God self-revealing that He possesses any of the qualities expected of an attachment figure?

2. What does such self-revelation reveal about the nature of his attachment behavior?

Research for the first question involved examining Scripture for self-revealing statements made by God and identifying those that could be interpreted as demonstrating

attachment behaviors according to the two behaviors attachment figures demonstrate: providing a secure base from which to explore and a safe haven to return to in times of distress. Research for the second question involved analyzing the collected divine self-revelations and summarizing them to provide a canonically-based understanding of God as an attachment figure.

Chapter Outline

Following this introductory chapter, chapter 2 outlines the theological and methodological perspectives that influenced how I answered the research questions. Chapter 3 provides a review of attachment and divine attachment literature. Chapter 4 presents the data collected and describes the nature and quality of God's attachment caregiving. It also includes any noteworthy additional findings. Chapter 5 presents the summary, conclusions, and possible future directions for study.

CHAPTER 2

A SURVEY OF ATTACHMENT, DIVINE ATTACHMENT

AND DIVINE LOVE LITERATURES

Introduction

This chapter will survey three literatures: attachment theory, divine attachment theory, and divine love. The survey of attachment theory will briefly summarize its origin and history, applications, and extensions. Divine attachment theory and research will be surveyed to provide an understanding of how religion came to be understood as an attachment process, how God came to be seen as an attachment figure, and to describe the existing perspectives on God as an attachment figure and how they impact believers. A gap in the literature will be identified. The survey of the divine love literature will describe three major theological models of divine love, as well as popular God schemata, explaining how each influences the concept of God as an attachment figure and believers' perspectives on his attachment caregiving. A case will be made that only one model of divine love and a specific schema can appropriately support the idea of God as an attachment figure in a manner that can further extend the applicability of the concept of divine attachment to discipleship and religious education.

Survey of Attachment Theory and Research

Definition

Attachment, the most foundational psychosocial relationship between humans, was first suggested by the British psychologist John Bowlby (1997, p. 119) as a framework for understanding the behavior of young children in relation to their mothers, not just in the presence of their mothers but especially in their absence (Bowlby et al., 1952, p. 82). Succinctly, attachment may be defined as an intergenerational, innate, enduring co-regulating behavioral system of attention-seeking behaviors met by responsive caregiving behaviors. Ainsworth (1985) observed that these behaviors can be summarized as attachment-seeking behaviors and caregiving behaviors. Attachment-seeking behaviors can be classified as either proximity maintenance or separation distress, both of which are employed to keep the attachment caregiver close; attachment caregiving behaviors are characterized as secure base and safe haven, the function of which is a supportive setting from which to explore the environment as well as a safe haven to return to when under threat or in times of stress (p. 800). Ainsworth (1979), through her *Strange Situation* studies of how children reacted to separation from their mothers and how mothers met the attachment needs of their infants, empirically confirmed Bowlby's observation of attachment behaviors. These findings led to the identification of a set of predictable responses that have become known as attachment styles (p. 932).

Bowlby (1973, 1979) noted that children, as attachment seekers, begin to recognize (even if subconsciously) patterns to the interactions with their caregivers and organize them into a system of mental representations of themselves and others which he

referred to as internal working models (IWMs). These IWMs form the basis of expectations regarding how future relationships will work. If the history of interactions is fraught with inconsistency and unreliability, the attachment process is disrupted, resulting in insecure attachment and the possibility of unsatisfactory relationships across the lifespan (Bowlby, 1997, p. 361). The quality of future attachment relationships, then, depends on the quality of interactions between the attachment seeker and the caregiver, the responsiveness and consistency of the attachment figure, and the degree to which an attachment seeker depends on the caregiver for security and comfort (Bowlby, 1988; 1997, p. 365).

Attachment-seeking Behaviors

Bowlby (1988) described attachment-seeking interactions as taking place between a "weaker and less experienced individual . . . toward someone regarded as stronger and/or wiser" (p. 121). These behaviors were succinctly defined by Ainsworth (1964) as "behavior through which a discriminating, differential, affectional relationship is established with a person or object, and thus initiates a chain of interaction which serves to consolidate the affectional relationship" (p. 51). As noted above, the two categories of attachment-seeking behaviors are proximity maintenance and separation distress. Proximity to an attachment figure brings feelings of peace, protection, comfort, and emotional support, while separation from the attachment figure provokes anxiety (Bowlby, 1973). Examples of bids for proximity include seeking to make eye contact with an attachment figure, desiring closeness, calling out, crying, and clinging, which, if met, lead to more positive affect and lower inhibition. Separation distress manifests as

displays of anxiety followed by increasingly intense proximity-seeking behaviors if the anxiety is not resolved (Ainsworth et al., 1978, p. 20).

Attachment Figures

The two attachment caregiving categories are secure base and safe haven. Respectively and under optimal circumstances, these two capacities provide a sense of security from which attachment seekers may explore their environment and a safe haven to which they may retreat when under threat or in distress. The role of the attachment figure in moderating the behavior of the attachment seeker goes well beyond functionally meeting needs, though: Saribay and Andersen (2007, p. 185) have suggested that the need for attachment security is due to a profound need for connection. Bowlby (1997), commenting on the deep affectional bond inherent in attachment, stated that "no form of behavior is accompanied by stronger feeling than is attachment behavior" (p. 209). Boccia (2011) suggested that attachment is a love relationship, an "emotional sea in which we live and move and have our being" (p. 22). The accessibility, sensitivity, and responsiveness of attachment figures encompass the entire range of human emotion (Ainsworth et al., 2015) and thus contribute to the attachment seeker's concept of love.

Attachment Styles

Attachment styles may be succinctly summarized as "relatively coherent and stable patterns of emotion and behavior exhibited in close relationships" (Shaver et al., 1996, p. 25). They are measured by the child's confidence that the attachment figure will be available and sensitive as a secure base from which to explore and a safe haven to retreat to (Cassidy et al., 2013, p. 1423). Under ideal circumstances, sensitive, responsive caregiving fosters secure attachment and healthy social development (Bohlin et al., 2000)

17

through the establishment of healthy IWMs of self and others, as noted above (Main et al., 1985; Ricks, 1985; Shaver et al., 1996). Accordingly, secure early attachment relationships have been recognized as essential for personal and relationship well-being (Feeney & Collins, 2004; Hesse & Trask, 2014; Stevens, 2017). Under less-than-ideal circumstances, attachment needs are met inconsistently or in ways that evoke fear, interfering with the development of a stable mental state, reducing resilience under stress, and predisposing individuals to psychological instability when faced with crises (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Insecure attachment has been linked to behavioral problems (Fearon et al., 2010), social-emotional deficits and relationship difficulties (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017; Storebø et al., 2013), and a higher risk of suffering mental disorders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012; Pielage et al., 2000; van Durme et al., 2014).

Extensions of Attachment Theory

Cross-cultural Applications

Bowlby understood the attachment system as an evolutionary product, intimating that there is cross-cultural applicability of the concept (Bowlby, 1958, p. 361). Ainsworth (Ainsworth et al., 1978, pp. 261-263) affirmed this with studies of infant-mother attachment conducted in Uganda and the United States. Other English-language articles published since evidence that attachment is being studied in other cultural contexts: in Germany (Grossmann et al., 1985), Israel (Sagi, 1990), Japan (Mizuta, 1996), Korea (Jin et al., 2012), and South Africa (Counted, 2016), to name just a few. While there have since been concerns among a few researchers that not enough consideration is given to various cultural traditions regarding attachment (Carlson & Harwood, 2003) or that attachment engenders value judgments and is therefore unethical (Keller, 2018), other

18

research has recognized that, while there will always be contextual differences, empirically observed attachment patterns and individual differences are universal and therefore cross-cultural (Mesman et al., 2016; Posada et al., 1995; Sagi, 1990).

Validity Across the Lifespan

Rather than being merely a system of behaviors for meeting exclusively childhood needs, it is a core experience held by everyone (Brown et al., 2008, p. 357). Bowlby (1979) believed it to be a vital lifespan experience "from the cradle to the grave" (p. 129). He observed that humans of all ages are happiest and best able to use their talents optimally when they have the confidence that there are trusted and supportive individuals who will assist if and when necessary, individuals who function as secure bases from which they may operate (Bowlby, 1973). Accordingly, attachment figures may change generationally and incorporate individuals outside the original family circle, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood (Bowlby, 1979, p. 125). Ainsworth (1989) agreed, suggesting specific extensions beyond parents, dependent on different types of social interactions: older siblings and other relatives, youth leaders, coaches, teachers, mentors, religious leaders, and friends (pp. 711-715).

Other Affectional Bonds

Subsequent research has confirmed Bowlby's belief and affirmed Ainsworth's work, empirically extending lifespan attachments to include other affectionally bonded relationships, including friendships (Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Saferstein et al., 2005) and romantic relationships (Feeney, 2016; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). Attachment has been extended to include even the relationships individuals have with their pets (Beck & Madresh, 2008; Sable, 1995).

Non-affectional Bonds

Relationships not necessarily rooted in affectional bonds but which develop out of the need for trust between people are also recognized as attachment relationships: workplace mentoring relationships (Yip et al., 2018), coach-athlete relationships (Cogburn et al., 2017; Felton & Jowett, 2013), family therapy relations (Brown et al., 2008), group processes (Knabb & Pelletier, 2014; Rom & Mikulincer, 2003; Thompson, 2021), psychotherapeutic relations (Mallinckrodt, 2000; Mayfield, 2022), street gangs (De Vito, 2020) and religious memberships (Freeze, 2017).

Attachment theory has been employed to inform how mental health services are designed and delivered (Bucci et al., 2014). Researchers have also identified ways in which primary care physicians, who are on the frontline of mental health care, may use attachment theory to communicate effectively with patients of any attachment style, enhancing their practices and improving health-related communications (Hooper et al., 2012). Attachment theory has also been taken into consideration by the foster care system, from educating professionals to better understand the children in care (McWey, 2004), to making placements and promoting attachment between foster parents and children (Gardenhire et al., 2019; Haight et al., 2003; Whelan, 2003).

Childhood Attachment

Internal Working Models

As noted above, interpersonal interactions between a child and a caregiver in the context of attachment contribute to the formation of mental representations of self and of others from the earliest moments and primarily outside one's conscious awareness (Bowlby, 1998; Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000). The resulting relational

frameworks are referred to as internal working models (IWMs). In Bowlby's (1997) conceptualization, the mental representation of self is composed of beliefs about the acceptability and worthiness of the self in the estimation of others, as judged by the responsiveness of those others to expressed need (pp. 129-133). The mental representation of others is built upon who the attachment figures are, their accessibility, and the responses a child may anticipate from them (Bowlby, 1998, p. 236; Main et al., 1985, p. 74).

The content of IWMs is thought to include not just knowledge of the details of the experiences of interpersonal interactions but also the neurophysiological response that was provoked in the child (Bretherton, 1985). They appear to be stored in and activated within the subconscious (Bowlby, 1998; Main et al., 1985), influencing personality development (Bowlby, 1997, p. 366; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002, p. 648) and the quality of future relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 521; Thompson, 2010, p. 116). With increased cognitive capacities and abilities as they grow older, children's IWMs are updated, necessarily increasing in complexity and sophistication (Bowlby, 1988, 1997). This allows for the development of goal-corrected partnerships (Bowlby, 1997), in which the child becomes a partner in deciding relationship goals and diffusing conflict. Interaction patterns rooted in IWMs will become more automatic the more frequently they are repeated, remaining stable and influencing future relationships in predictable ways (Bowlby, 1973).

In addition to the above-mentioned developmental modifications to IWMs, dramatic changes in attachment figure behavior can also improve or destabilize IWMs. When stressful circumstances improve or appropriate support is made available to

neglectful or rejecting caregivers, parents may be able to respond more sensitively to the

child's needs, becoming a trustworthy attachment figure. Defensive modifications, such

as hyperactivation or deactivation of attachment behaviors, may occur when a previously

reliable attachment figure neglects, rejects, or abandons the child or otherwise becomes

unreliable (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008, p. 105). Defensive changes to IWMs occur

to prevent the child from remembering thoughts or events that would be insufferable if

they were maintained. These modifications may become maladaptive if held too long or

if they persist in the face of positive change. Once defensive modifications are

established, conscious reconstruction of IWMs may become difficult but not impossible.

Children can adapt and revise their IWMs if encouraged by attachment caregivers who

communicate openly (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008, pp. 104-108).

The restructuring of IWMs is helped when religious alternative attachment figures

model God as a source of love, knowledgeable of individual's lives, and always available

(Nygaard et al., 2020, p. 502) and the role of alternative attachment figures as a source of

support for overcoming insecure attachments (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 405). Finding

ways to increase attachment to and engagement with God would be wise (Freeze &

DiTommaso, 2015), recognizing that healing God concepts and images should ideally be

done through Scripture and with trustworthy, dependable, and safe members of the faith

community (Kam, 2018, p. 356).

Childhood Attachment Styles

A secure childhood attachment is characterized by love, approval, closeness,

security, and warmth provided by an available, consistently responsive attachment figure

(Bowlby, 1997). Heller (2019) has recently noted that secure attachment is also inclusive

of the development of autonomy and interdependence, the ability to relax in the presence of the other, trust that the world is ultimately a good place, and resilience (pp. 28-32). Boccia (2011) concurs, recognizing that secure attachment in infancy influences healthy development and provides children with an environment conducive to achieving their developmental potential. In addition, the IWMs of securely attached individuals influence them to hold similarly positive expectations of future relationship partners (p. 23).

Inconsistencies in attachment caregiving behaviors establish insecure attachment styles, of which there are three. Ainsworth et al. (1978) suggested that avoidant attachment is characterized by the child's withdrawal from the attachment figure (deactivation of attachment seeking behaviors) due to the attachment figure's emotional and physical unreliability and inaccessibility (pp. 316-317). Heller (2019) includes isolation, task-based parental presence, the absence of affectionate touch, expressive dissonance, and rejection in her description of the avoidant style (p. 59). Caregivers of this type are frequently strict and emotionally distant, resulting in the attachment seeker's avoidance of closeness or interaction with others. The consequences of this attachment style include marked independence from attachment figures, a lack of trust in others, and reduced self-confidence. The child may be perceived to be detached, aloof, insensitive, or stand-offish, but these behaviors are best understood as learned reactions to an unmet desire for closeness. Rather than suffer disappointment the child suppresses that desire, preventing him or her from depending on others and experiencing genuine connection. The IWMs constructed in the context of avoidant childhood attachment tend to lead to avoidance in future relationships.

Insecure-anxious attachment is distinguished by a pattern of warm, loving, responsive, and nurturing caregiving alternating with aloof, unresponsive, unreliable, insensitive, and emotionally unavailable caregiving (Ainsworth et al., 2015; Thais Gibson, 2020; Heller, 2019). As a result, the child will be anxious, confused, suspicious, distrustful, and fearful of rejection or abandonment. The inconsistency of this attachment style has been noted to contribute to a child's flawed perceptions of self and lowered expectations of close others. Children with this attachment style generally feel unloved while at the same time having a deep desire to be loved by their attachment figures. This feeling of being unloved causes them to engage in heightened attention-seeking behaviors and, simultaneously, to resist or reject affection because of their experience with inconsistent attachment caregiving. Future relationships, influenced by the IWMs built by the experience of insecure anxious attachment, are marked by inconsistent emotional interactions.

An insecure-disorganized attachment may be characterized by inconsistent emotional and physical support, family turmoil, confusion, and possibly abuse or trauma to the child (though not all children classified as disorganized have experienced maltreatment) or the attachment figure (Granqvist et al., 2017, p. 540). The caregiver is not perceived as a secure base or safe haven but as a source of fear (Heller, 2019, p. 107). The child socialized under such circumstances will lack a coherent framework for experiencing attachment (Boccia, 2011, p. 22) and will experience anxiety and confusion, lack impulse control, and have difficulty trusting others while being predisposed to social and behavioral problems (Granqvist et al., 2017, p. 536). Such children may also engage in off-putting self-preserving behaviors and self-absorption. The IWMs arising from such

disorganized attachment experiences will predispose future relationships to highly erratic and unreliable interactions.

As demonstrated above, the quality of the early relationship between the infant and caregiver influences all future relationships. Infants exhibit "greatest dependency" during the child-caregiver phase and develop and (hopefully) mature toward "greater equality and reciprocity" in their primary attachment relationships and those they have with others (Miner, 2007, p. 120). Attachment needs and behaviors do not disappear with the arrival of adolescence. Fraley and Roisman (2019) found that motivations for attachment relationships shift in adolescence from necessity to preference (p. 27). Allen and Tan (2016) recognized this in their study of adolescent attachment, noting a "constellation of relational, behavioral, and affective elements at play" (p. 399) as adolescents seek to establish enduring peer-focused affectional bonds and romantic relationships. Researchers have found that adolescents continue to use their parents as their primary attachment figures while transferring some attachment functions to peers or romantic relationships (Fraley & Davis, 1997), evidencing the influence of early attachments on new ones. Additionally, the quality of the attachment autonomy adolescents achieve with others is "directly related to the quality of attachment relationships" they have with their parents (Brown & Strawn, 2012, p. 62).

<div align="center">Adult Attachment</div>

Internal Working Models

Adult attachment styles are partly rooted in early childhood attachments due to the influence of IWMs. However, beginning in adolescence, a shift occurs away from parents and toward peers (Fraley & Davis, 1997), away from attachments of socialization

<div align="center">25</div>

and toward those of selection (Fraley & Roisman, 2019, p. 27). As a result, adult attachment styles are defined differently than those of childhood. Rather than being defined by the observation of attachment-seeking behaviors, adult attachment is defined by the individual's assessment of the IWMs he or she holds of self and others.

Individuals may have multiple attachment styles for multiple attachment figures, depending on the variability of the care they receive from each one (Collins & Read, 1994, p. 61). As a result, individuals can identify relationships that fit within both their general attachment styles and relationship-specific attachment styles (Baldwin et al., 1996, p. 95). Whether general or relationship-specific, adult attachment styles influence people's perceptions of self and others (Mikulincer, 1998, p. 445), personal emotional regulation (Read et al., 2018, p. 13), choice of particular types of partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 522), and perceptions of romantic relationships (Monteoliva et al., 2016, p. 942).

Interestingly, and perhaps somewhat controversially, it has been suggested that the secure attachment category does not exist. Instead, it has been proposed that adult attachment styles should be referred to in terms of attachment security as defined by an individual's scores on the anxious and the avoidant dimensions which may be conceptualized as being on intersecting spectra[1] (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 227; Fraley & Shaver, 2000, p. 135). The determination of attachment style is achieved by the evaluation of scores on the anxious and avoidant dimensions of attachment (Kaufman, 2021, pp. 17-18).

---

[1] This concept allows for definitions of attachment relationships that are dimensional rather than one-size-fits-all, reducing the pressure inherent in the idea that any attachment relationship may (or should) be perfect. There are also significant implications for divine attachment which will be addressed below.

Adult Attachment Styles

The most secure adult attachment style is characterized by low anxiety about relationships and low avoidance, a positive model of self and others, as well as by a positive mindset and successful affect regulation (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Waters et al., 2002). Securely attached adults do not fear closeness or abandonment. Instead, they believe that forming close relationships with others is easy, they can connect with others in "healthy, mutually beneficial ways" (Heller, 2019, p. 13), and that the corresponding interdependent interactions are comfortable.

Avoidant adult attachment, also known as dismissing-avoidant, is marked by low anxiety about relationships and high avoidance, discomfort with close relationships, difficulty trusting or depending on others, and uneasiness with relational intimacy (Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000, p. 157). The avoidant adult has a positive model of self but a negative view of others (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Clinton & Sibcy, 2002), leading to compulsive self-reliance and distance in relationships (Heller, 2019, p. 61; Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000, p. 161).

An anxious or preoccupied adult attachment is distinguished by high anxiety about relationships and low avoidance. This manifests in a desire for closeness that may not be matched by others, leading to fear of abandonment and doubts about love and commitment (Thais Gibson, 2020; Heller, 2019; Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000). In addition, the preoccupied adult has a negative model of self and a high view of others (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Clinton & Sibcy, 2002), predisposing them to dependence on others for evidence of worthiness, clinginess in

relationships mixed with an intense fear of rejection or abandonment, and inconsistent parenting.

The fearful-avoidant adult attachment is marked by high anxiety and high avoidance behaviors expressed by a desire for closeness with others that is avoided out of fear of rejection and abandonment (Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000). This attachment style is undergirded by negative views of self and others (Bartholomew, 1990; Clinton & Sibcy, 2002), causing the fearful individual to behave in neurotic ways that often drive others to avoid them (Thais Gibson, 2020, p. 50; Heller, 2019, p. 124).

Earned Security

Within the last decade, another category of attachment security has been studied empirically. Referred to in the literature as earned or evolved secure (Hesse, 2016; Roisman et al., 2002; Saunders et al., 2011), it recognizes Bowlby's (1988, p. 135) observation that mothers with unpleasant early attachment who were able to process and resolve unhappy memories were equally able to foster secure attachment in their children as mothers who had a secure childhood attachment. In other words, secure attachment is not limited to those who recall early attachment relationships positively. Emotional support, therapy, positive interventions, alternate attachment figures, and supportive partners have been recognized as key indicators that enabled mothers with insecure attachments in their histories to provide warm, responsive caregiving to their children (Egeland et al., 1988, p. 1087). The presence of specific interpersonal cues can lead to shifts in beliefs about the self and others (Saribay & Andersen, 2007, p. 184). These findings support the concept that individuals may have more than one attachment style and may have multiple attachment figures (Collins & Read, 1994, p. 69).

Further research findings show that attachment foundations and the processes that shape them, while powerful, should not be seen as prescriptive or deterministic (Fraley & Roisman, 2019, p. 27). In keeping with psychosocial developmental theory, though there is long-term stability in IWMs due to their subconscious nature, neuroplasticity allows for adaptability if they should be consciously examined (Greggo, 2007, p. 6). Put another way, psychosocial development occurs as IWMs are continually subject to reconstruction or revision and integration of other models (Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000, p. 162). As demonstrated, this adaptability enables individuals to move from one attachment style to another and allows for relationship-specific attachment styles with different attachment figures across the lifespan (Ainsworth, 1991; Bowlby, 1988, 1997; Collins et al., 2004; Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017; Fraley et al., 2011; Greggo, 2007).

<center>Romantic Love as Attachment</center>

Hazan and Shaver (1987) were the first to conceptualize romantic love as an attachment process. Taking as their starting point the concept of the continuity of attachment styles across the lifespan described by Bowlby (1973, 1979), they studied the distribution of adult attachment styles and found them to be similar to those found among infants and children. They further hypothesized that there would be predictable differences in love attachments, that IWMs would differ according to attachment style, that memories of maternal attachment would also differ predictably along attachment style lines, and that insecurely attached adults would be particularly vulnerable to loneliness (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 513). Their hypotheses were supported by their findings: the distribution of adult attachment styles mirrors (but is not completely explained by) that of childhood attachments, and the strength and quality of attachment

relationships may vary according to the particular attachment figure and circumstances surrounding each relationship. In addition, predictable differences in romantic experiences were found between attachment style groups, indicating the influence of IWMs on perceptions of romantic love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 521).

Securely attached lovers reported their romantic attachment experiences as "happy, friendly, and trusting" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 515). These lovers also reported that romantic feelings fluctuated but could sometimes match the early intensity they experienced and that love does not fade in some relationships. When their parental attachments were considered, secure lovers were found not only to have experienced warm caregiving relationships with their parents, but they also observed a loving relationship between their parents (p. 517). The impact of IWMs on romantic attachment was noted in secure lovers' emphasis on being more accepting and supportive of their partners' flaws and the finding that their relationships tended to last longer than insecure types.

Avoidantly attached lovers described their "fear of intimacy, emotional highs and lows, and jealousy" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 515). They believed that finding someone to fall deeply in love with is rare, that "head-over-heels romantic love" does not exist, and that romantic love rarely endures (p. 515). Their insecure parental attachments were particularly marked by mothers they described as rejecting and emotionally cold. Though distant from other people, avoidant types did not report feeling lonely.

In addition to the fears described by avoidant lovers, anxiously attached lovers also reported experiencing obsessive thoughts and behavior, strong desires to merge with another and have their feelings reciprocated, and extreme sexual attraction. These

respondents found falling in love easy but rarely found a love they felt was real (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 515). Insecure parental attachment experiences were most notably influenced by fathers they described as unfair. These lovers reported greater loneliness than secure or insecure avoidant lovers.

These findings indicate that romantic attachment styles are predictable along the lines identified in children by Bowlby (1973, 1979) and Ainsworth (Ainsworth, 1964; Ainsworth, 1979; Ainsworth et al., 1978). Subsequent studies have confirmed that enduring romantic relationships regularly and predictably provide attachment functions (Granqvist et al., 2010; see also Feeney, 2008; Feeney, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). Love is experienced differently by people in each of the attachment style groups, and IWMs contribute predictably to beliefs about and experiences in romantic love. The degree of security or anxiety one might experience in a romantic relationship is influenced by attachment style and factors relating to the uniqueness of partners. It is not a stretch, then, to suggest that how we experience attachment with intimate love relationship partners may influence how we attach to God.

<div align="center">Romantic Love, Attachment, and Religious Belief</div>

William James (2017) likened religious conversion to falling in love, suggesting similar psychological processes at play. Believing romantic love and religion were presentations not just of similar psychological processes but also of attachment processes, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) conceptualized personal religion as an attachment similar to romantic love. They conducted a study that explored the link between adult attachment styles and religious beliefs and behaviors, hypothesizing that the stable, enduring nature of IWMs meant that believers' attachments to God would be constructed and maintained

in a way comparable to aspects of their interpersonal romantic attachments. Their results supported their hypothesis: secure lovers also appear to be secure believers, indicating a significant correspondence between romantic adult attachment and God attachment styles.

One key feature shared by adult romantic attachments and attachment to God is that both relationships involve a reciprocity that is not present in childhood attachments. Hazan and Shaver (1987) noted that romantic attachments are "usually a two-way street" (p. 522). Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) suggested that the concept of attachment explains theistic religion "even more neatly than it does romantic love," perhaps representing a "much purer example of adult attachment relationship" since the sexual nature of adult romance does not complicate it (p. 267).

<center>Religion as an Attachment Process</center>

The idea of religion as an attachment process has been called "one of the most fruitful developments in the psychology of religion in recent years" (Watts, 2017, p. 114). Research strongly indicates that religious beliefs, behaviors, and experiences—deeply personal to millions around the world—are better understood when placed within a framework of religion as an attachment process (Cherniak et al., 2021; Granqvist, 2020; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 1994, 1997, 2005, 2012; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). The presence of the dynamics of the attachment system within Christianity was first acknowledged by Reed (1978), who noted that the relationship between Israel and God exhibited "every form of attachment behavior, and of the behavior of the attachment figure, identified by Bowlby" (p. 14). Attachment has since been recognized in the expression of other religions, including Buddhism (Granqvist et

<center>32</center>

al., 2010), Islam (Ghobary Bonab et al., 2013), and Judaism (Granqvist et al., 2012; Pirutinsky et al., 2019).

Religion as an attachment process involves believers' perceptions of having a relationship with God. Additionally, their attachment behaviors toward him, proximity maintenance, and separation distress have been determined to meet the formal criteria for an attachment relationship (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1994, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). The criterion of proximity maintenance is met by the belief that God is always close through his omnipresence, and prayer is the most frequently practiced proximity maintenance behavior (Granqvist et al., 2010, p. 51). Not as easily determined is the criterion of separation distress applied to a relationship with God since this attachment behavior cannot be measured in the same way human attachment behaviors are (Granqvist et al., 2010, p. 51).

Believers' perceptions of God's omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence influence their orientation toward him as a secure base and strongly influence their quality of life. Granqvist et al. (2012) obtained empirical results supporting the idea that God is generally perceived to be a safe haven and a secure base. Still, the degree to which that is so depends upon individual differences. Empirical studies on religion and mental health confirm that secure attachment to God corresponds positively with favorable views of God, stable religiosity, and greater life satisfaction (Granqvist, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). Individuals who report secure attachment to God also report higher subjective ratings of well-being and less anxiety, depression, and illness than those who report insecure anxious attachment (Leman et al., 2018; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Additionally, secure attachment to God is associated with decreased distress, positively

influences an individual's reaction to stressful life events (Ellison et al., 2012, p. 503), and is a predictor of positive mental health (Leman et al., 2018, p. 166).

Conversely, insecure attachment to God does not correlate positively with the idea that God is forgiving (Leman et al., 2018, p. 166). Insecure avoidant attachment has been found to correlate negatively with doctrinal orthodoxy and intrinsic religious orientation, while insecure anxious attachment correlated with extrinsic religious orientation and neuroticism (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002, p. 648). Insecure anxious attachment has also been found to correlate strongly with depression and anxiety (Pirutinsky et al., 2019, p. 166), to amplify the harmful effects of stress (Ellison et al., 2012, p. 507), predispose individuals to mental health challenges (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012, p. 12; Pielage et al., 2000), and inhibit an individual's ability to consider the internal states of self and others (Fonagy & Bateman, 2008, p. 5). Recognizing that these are not optimal experiences, Leman et al. (2018) suggested that attachment to God and God concepts be included in future research due to the role studying both could play in ameliorating such struggles. They also noted that the believer's perception of God's responsiveness could provide comfort and increase well-being (p. 171).

Attachment to God is presently measured by the extent to which a believer *perceives* God to be a secure base for exploration and a safe haven in times of distress, as well as the extent to which the believer seeks proximity to him and experiences anxiety when feeling separated from him (Zahl & Gibson, 2012). The idea that perception, a subjective experience, is the benchmark for whether God is a sufficient attachment figure raises theological concerns for which there is no current alternative in the literature.

Attachment in Religious Community

Starky (1999, p. 34) noted that one of the functions of a faith community, including the pastoral leaders, is to foster secure attachments for individuals who are seeking change in their lives. These attachments can provide individuals with a secure base from which to explore new information and new ways of living. A committed faith community can reasonably be expected to provide support "strong enough to disconfirm extant internal working models which are leading to inadequate forecasting and interpretation of the behaviour of others" (Starky, 1999, p. 34). This may be accomplished in part by engaging in security priming, which involves focusing on positive cues. Saribay and Andersen (2007, p. 183) found that "security priming appears to make individuals more open to learning about their weaknesses, as they rely less on defensive mechanisms to establish or maintain their sense of self-worth." Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) suggested that "if human beings were helped by their families, communities, schools, religious institutions, and cultural media to become more secure" by means of proactive attachment strengthening, "they would be better able to create a kinder and more tolerant, harmonious, and peaceful society" (p. 150). Religious communities could benefit from a canonical model of divine attachment employed as a means of increasing attachment security.

An understanding of attachment and how an individual perceives of self and others will enable a mentor-discipler to "see beyond the dysfunctional relational behavior" (Houser & Welch, 2013) of an insecurely attached believer and more intentionally assist them through the process of examining, modifying, and rebuilding dysfunctional internal working models (Kam, 2018). This process is supported by

literature on the psychology of religious experience which urges awareness of and attendance to the necessary growth of an individual's meaning-making model or metaphysical framework (Paloutzian & Park, 2013).

Attachment and Faith Development

The influence of attachment style on faith development has been explored over the past two decades. In the case of pastoral effectiveness (and, it could be argued, discipleship success), the role of attachment has been recognized as a favorable context for developing relational security leading to spiritual maturity (TenElshof & Furrow, 2000, pp. 99-100). Studying the faith maturity of seminary students TenElshof and Furrow (2000, p. 107), found that secure attachment relationships of any kind have more of an effect on faith maturity than childhood attachments. Secure attachment was also found to be significantly correlated with both general and vertical spiritual maturity, fostering deeper devotional experience with God, compassion for others, and service in their communities and beyond (pp. 107, 102). They went on to suggest that students lacking secure adult attachment relationships experience "corresponding limitations in their spiritual maturity" (p. 106). Due to the nature of attachment as a human experience it is possible to imagine that if this is true for pastoral students, it is very likely to be true about other members of faith communities.

Attachment anxiety has been defined as anxiety that results from inconsistencies in the quality of attentiveness, sensitivity, and responsiveness of an attachment figure. When applied to the divine attachment relationship, this anxiety is demonstrated in a variety of ways. Hart et al. (2010, p. 126) found attachment anxiety to be inversely proportional to faith development and proportionally related to faith development. Lower

levels of faith development were found to be characterized by concrete thinking, adherence to generally accepted authoritative positions, "and typically involve a resistance or lack of initiative to question traditional or societal constructs" (Hart et al., 2010, p. 126) as well as reduced tolerance of other Christian faith communities (Beck, 2006, p. 130). The Hart et al. (2010) study went on to note that individuals with anxious divine attachment (and subsequent lower levels of faith development) typically cling to traditional beliefs and dislike the inherent uncertainty of critical thinking and doubt (and even the suggestion of these elements). This may be attributable to the fear that questioning established tenets of their faith could cause God to abandon them (Beck, 2006, p. 127).

Conversely, secure and avoidant attachments do not predict faith development the way anxious attachment does, indicating both of these styles have higher levels of spiritual maturity than anxious attachments. At higher levels of attachment security individuals have been found to engage in more self-reflection and to experience conflict with the existing state of affairs of their faith communities. Additionally, these individuals are less likely to insist on "establishing and defining the limits of God's grace" (Hart et al., 2010, p. 127), rather tending to be tolerant of different Christian faith communities (Beck, 2006, p. 129). Such individuals are more inclined to conceptualize ideas in new ways that contribute not only to their own faith development but also that of others (Hart et al., 2010, p. 126). Individuals who experience more secure attachment to God tend to have higher confidence leading to theologically exploration and a willingness to take on deeper spiritual challenges without feeling that their explorations cause God to be angry with them (Beck, 2006, p. 126; Hart et al., 2010, p. 127). Where secure and

avoidant attachments have been distinguished from each other is in the different effects they have on orthodoxy and theological interest. Secure attachments were found to be more related to orthodoxy and theological curiosity, but not to the extent that these individuals would reject core doctrines. Avoidant attachments, on the other hand, were linked to disinterest in theological exploration (little or no curiosity) leading to heterodoxy (Beck, 2006, p. 129).

Hart et al. (2010, p. 126) suggest that if faith is to grow, individuals must see God without fear of abandonment. TenElshof and Furrow (2000), noting that IWMs are at the root of spiritual maturity, assert that the establishment of new IWMs would bring "greater possibility for mature spirituality" (p. 106), which could lead to the resolution of that fear of abandonment. To promote faith maturity, IWMs of God need, at the very least, to be remodeled if not completely rebuilt. A canonical understanding of God as an attachment figure may provide the content and context for this process.

Attachment and Relationship Quality

In general, secure attachments appear to lead to healthier relationships (Kam, 2018, p. 345). When individuals feel more secure, they are more likely to engage in more intimate conversations (Grabill & Kerns, 2000, p. 375). Securely attached adults also appear to be more interested in engaging in discipleship practices (Knabb & Pelletier, 2014, p. 354). Secure small group attachments have been observed to contribute to lowered levels of anxiety in members, an increase in faith maturity, and the deepening of personal relationships with God (Knabb & Pelletier, 2014, p. 356). Differences in attachment style have also been linked to differences in moral behavior. Individuals who scored high in insecure avoidant God attachment in particular were found to have lower

scores in care and fairness, and especially lower scores in authority and moral purity (Njus & Scharmer, 2020, p. 240), all indicators of respect for others.

It has been suggested that the small group relational context plays a significant role in the development of healthy relationships with others and with God. Bible studies with a focus on spiritual formation were found to increase scores relating to individuals' conceptualizations of God's presence and influence, as well as their awareness of God (Rasar et al., 2013, p. 274). While this is particularly important for the spiritual development of all individuals, it is a significant consideration for those individuals with insecure attachments. Research participants who reported any kind of childhood trauma (a precursor to insecure attachment) were found to be less likely to have positive images of God but were very likely to be benefitted by the acquisition of positive God representations as part of their recovery processes (Kosarkova et al., 2020, p. 8). Small group relationships that offer psychological and spiritual protection and foster secure attachment may be instrumental in helping insecurely attached persons process and recover from trauma, as well as become more securely attached (Kucharska, 2018, p. 547).

Relationships between individuals in the faith community at large influence the security of divine attachment and the willingness of individuals to become more involved (Brown & Strawn, 2012, p. 113; Houser & Welch, 2013, p. 285). Negative interactions combined with a lack of support have been linked to lowered well-being (Pargament et al., 2003), leaving many adult church members with emotional injuries and insecure attachment that appears to interfere with their faith in God (McCandless, 1982). Additionally, insecure individuals are less likely to adopt the religious standards of

insensitive attachment figures (Granqvist et al., 2010, p. 55), no matter how orthodox those standards may be. Mikulincer and Shaver (2005, p. 37) suggested that secure attachment is a foundation for compassion and caregiving that can also be linked to altruism, traits which promote positive relationships.

Attachment and Human Nature

Human nature is wholistic and embodied. Much of what makes an individual who she or he is inheres from her or his physical realities. Brown and Strawn assert that "the highest and most distinctive characteristics of human nature are the outcome of the functioning of our bodies and brains" (Brown & Strawn, 2012, p. 29). Attachment styles have been found to exert significant influence on human physiology.

Human physiology is affected by the security of the individual's attachment. The process of emotional regulation inherent to attachment is a neurobiological function: the more secure the attachment, the better the regulation, the more positive the effect on the human organism. Internal working models (IWMs), as collections of cognitive and emotional memories gathered in response to attachment caregiving, are stored not just in the brain but throughout the body. Brown and Strawn (2012) briefly reviewed neuroscience and neurology to provide evidence of the "physical embodiment of all that we are," and suggested that the goal of such an understanding of human nature should be lead believers to engage in the Christian life more adequately (p. 30). Thompson (2021) concluded similarly that it is a "necessary feature" of a healthy religious life "to have a conscious, embodied awareness of being known by God" (p. 21). The totality of the human organism is necessary for interaction with the divine in whose image humans have been created.

Relational behaviors have been linked to neurological changes, supporting the assertion that attachment exerts an influence on physiology. Researchers have found that interactions between people with secure attachment relationships and higher self-awareness scores may stimulate growth in specific regions of the brain that promote feelings of connectedness between individuals (Bock et al., 2021), which is key for healthy discipleship. Another study showed that regions of the brain involved with personal and vicarious emotions are recruited during intersubjective (sharing) experiences (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008, p. 109), hinting at the value of engagement with others in the religious life.

Other research has suggested that insecure attachments are psychologically pathogenic, contributing to mental disorders ranging from a mildly negative affect to severe personality disorders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012, p. 14). These disorders tend to predispose the individual to stress-related physiological changes in the brain and physical health due to poor emotional regulation and risky behavioral choices (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2019) which may also lead to erratic spiritual behaviors. In the context of personal spirituality and religion, the greater the level of pathological behavior, the more negative are the implications for an individual's God image (Grimes, 2014, p. 26; Schaap-Jonker et al., 2002). A very strong case is made for a model of divine attachment that can correct God images (and God concepts), reduce pathological behavior, and stabilize personal religious experience.

Divine Attachment

Of all the subdisciplines in psychology, very few have had as influential, enduring, and broad an impact as attachment theory. It draws from and integrates

multiple psychological theories, including the cognitive-affective, biological, and psychodynamic (Miner, 2007), and has been extended to a wide variety of relationships, as noted above. Rizzuto (1979) was the first to suggest that individuals can experience a relationship with God in ways just as real as their human relationships, making the application of attachment theory to relationships with God theoretically possible. In addition, several researchers found that believers perceive God as an attachment figure who is objectively knowable (Bosworth, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Miner, 2007). Starky (1999) recognized that the study of divine attachment should not be exclusive to psychologists of religion, insisting that "attachment theory definitely deserves further attention from pastoral theologians" (p. 34).

This section will explore the development of the concept of God as an attachment figure from the theological perspective, the influence of IWMs in divine attachment, the role of God representations in the formation of divine attachment bonds, and models of divine attachment.

<center>God as an Attachment Figure</center>

Before others extended his model to include attachment to God, Bowlby (1998) was aware that the issue of physical proximity might compromise the possibility of his theory being applied in this way. He subsequently moved away from emphasizing the necessity of physical proximity toward a psychological proximity model. This shift in thinking made it possible for later researchers to conceptualize God as an actual attachment figure despite the lack of his physical presence.

Gordon Kaufman (1981), commenting on Bowlby's theory from a theological perspective, wrote that God is "an absolutely adequate attachment-figure" (p. 67) and that

attachment to him is not "an optional or merely morally desirable characteristic" but "an indispensable and ineradicable characteristic of our human nature" (p. 58). Three decades later, Boccia (2011) proposed that God endowed humanity with the capacity for attachment relationships as the foundation for attachment to himself. Knabb and Emerson (2013), exploring the concept of divine attachment in the first three chapters of Genesis, found that all characteristics of the attachment system are apparent in the Creation narrative and that the original attachment relationship between God and humanity was forfeited at the Fall (p. 834). They went on to suggest that attachment to God provides a strong context for understanding the need for redemption and restoration (p. 836).

Despite the lack of physical proximity, several empirical studies have confirmed that individuals do perceive God to be an attachment figure who is available and responsive, fully capable, and willing to meet their needs (Clinton & Straub, 2010; Granqvist et al., 2012; Kirkpatrick, 1992; Miner et al., 2014). Other research has confirmed that religious behaviors, such as prayer and Scripture reading, provide psychological proximity in the absence of the physical presence of God (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick, 1997). While God's concrete presence cannot be measured empirically, research has shown that the believer may stimulate his abstract presence through the employment of anthropomorphisms and other measures intended to evoke a psychological sense of closeness, such as the use of religious objects and participation in spiritual disciplines (Adamovová & Halama, 2009).

God as a secure base is attested in the literature in that believers often find him to be "a source of support and strength" (Beck, 2006, p. 126).

The Role of Internal Working Models in Divine Attachment

Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992), studying differences in divine attachment styles, found that adult attachment groups differed not in their beliefs in whether God exists or whether it is possible to have a personal relationship with him but rather in their internal working models (IWMs) of God. TenElshof and Furrow (2000) agreed, noting that spiritual maturity in adulthood needs to be "developed through the establishment of new working models of relationship that will bring greater possibility for mature spirituality" (p. 106).

A substantial body of research has confirmed that early IWMs of self and of others, parental religiosity, faith communities, and popular societal constructs of God make significant contributions to divine attachment (Clinton & Straub, 2010; Granqvist, 1998; Granqvist et al., 2010; Hall, Fujikawa, Halcrow, Hill, et al., 2009; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Louw, 2000; McDonald et al., 2005; Zarzycka, 2019).

Parental Influence on IWMs

Christian Scripture declares that God is love (1 John 4:8). Saribay and Anderson (2007) have suggested that the nature of love one feels in a relationship is the crucial influence on the quality of outcomes of the attachment process. Just as the quality of parental love and attachment caregiving felt by children influences children's IWMs of future relationships, it also influences children's conceptualizations of God as an attachment caregiver. Nineteenth-century religious author Ellen White (1854) wrote that "parents stand in the place of God to their children" in their early years (p. 45). Bushnell (1991) suggested that children may be influenced to live as Christians by observing their parents living a Christian lifestyle (p. 16). Hertel and Donahue (1995) hypothesized that

parents' God images influenced their parenting styles which in turn would influence their children's God images. They found that children's images of their parents predicted their God image and that parents' God images predicted children's God images. Additionally, parents with a loving God image were more likely to be seen as loving by their children, suggesting that they indeed transmit their God images to their children. It has also been observed that loving and affectionate parents contribute to the development of God in their children (Chou & Uata, 2012; Potvin, 1977).

When testing divine attachment hypotheses, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) found that mothers' religiosity was a significant moderator between an individual's attachment history, worship service attendance, belief in a personal God, and the experience of a personal relationship with God. A follow-up study by Granqvist (1998) achieved similar results, affirming that parental religiosity must be considered when describing an adult's religious experience in attachment terms. Blatt and Auerbach (2000) identified that "secure attachment appears to involve more stable, consistent, positive, and integrated representations of others," including God (p. 439).

Conversely, parental behavior may also contribute to insecure attachment to God: the more adolescents see their parents controlling their lives, the more likely they will see God as punishing (Potvin, 1977, p. 51). McDonald et al. (2005) studied the roles of parental spirituality and parental attachment on attachment to God and found that individuals whose parents were unspiritual, hypocritical, authoritarian, and rigid were significantly more likely to exhibit God avoidance or anxiety than secure attachment. These results supported the concept of correspondence between IWMs of parents and an individual's attachment orientation toward God.

Church Family Influence on IWMs

Attachment to a church family also influences attachment to God. Andersen et al. (2005) noted that experiencing warmth in relationships can profoundly affect an individual's willingness to identify with and engage with a group such as a church family (p. 216). Other psychologists have noted that "warmth is such a potent human glue that its indirect experience may be sufficient to increase social harmony" (Saribay & Andersen, 2007, p. 188). In this sense, the warmth with which the Church family treats its members contributes to the formation of IWMs of God, either strengthening positive IWMs or contributing to negative ones and causing divine attachment injuries.

The influence of parents and church family on the formation of IWMs of God cannot be understated. When combined, a more comprehensive conceptualization of who God is and how he feels about us takes shape. These God representations influence the perceived quality of relationship with him, directly impacting discipleship experiences.

God Representations

Key to understanding divine attachment is an understanding of God representations. Consisting of God images and God concepts, God representations are critical components of the internal working models (IWMs) of divine attachment due to their cognitive and affective influences on how an individual perceives God as an attachment figure.

God Images

God images are the primarily implicit affective or experiential understandings of God—a nonverbal, relational, and emotional conceptualization of God that corresponds with the actions and behaviors of early-years caregivers (Counted, 2015, p. 7), which

forms the basis of an emotional bond that might be more formative than just ideas arising

out of God concepts (Leman et al., 2018, p. 170). God images develop as a result of what

individuals feel about God and how they believe he feels about them (Rizzuto, 1979).

God images are heavily influenced by family, the faith community one belongs to, one's

subculture, and the society at large (Boccia, 2011, p. 26), contributing significantly to an

individual's implicit knowledge of how to interact with others in general and with specific

relational partners like God (Counted, 2015, p. 4). Unfortunately, there has been

comparatively little reflection on God images compared with God concepts (Counted,

2015, p. 2).

Theological schemata of God images

Louw (2000) demonstrated how God images have been significantly influenced

by culture and philosophy in his delineation of the most common schemata. These widely

held beliefs, unwittingly assimilated by believers by way of their immersion in the

various church cultures that embrace them, strongly influence how individuals perceive

God and interact with him. A summary of the most common schemata follows.

The *Hellenistic schema* examines God from the logical perspective of Greek

philosophy. This schema predisposes the individual to view God in terms of complete

otherness compared to humanity—his sovereignty, simplicity, self-sufficiency,

immutability, impassibility, and timelessness are distinctly at odds with human existence

and human nature. Similarly, the *metaphysical schema* "introduces an ontological schism

between God and our human existence" (Louw, 2000, p. 7), presenting a God so utterly

transcendent that he is concealed from human efforts to know and understand him and

does not (even cannot) have any involvement in world events or believers' lives. Both of

these schemata are openly manifest in classical theism (see Dolezal, 2017; Helm, 2008). Neither of them provides sufficient cognitive or affective substrate for the idea of God as an attachment figure because the insistence on his utter transcendence precludes him from interacting with humans in ways appropriate to the provision of attachment caregiving.

The *imperialistic schema* offers an image of God modeled after ancient imperial, militaristic rulers who held absolute power and determined many, if not all, aspects of life. It has also contributed to God being seen as a champion of culture rather than the Church. The image of God presented by the *patriarchal schema* is that of a stern patriarch, a strict authoritarian, who dominates humanity, not unlike the imperialist. While these conceptualizations may fit the attachment need for a stronger, wiser other that would provide security and safety, they are simultaneously incompatible with the warm, loving nature of an attachment figure that inspires the desire for closeness.

A *hierarchical schema* is based on the characteristics of an orderly society in which position and status matter greatly, especially along class lines, providing greater benefits to those with higher status. This God image schema is incompatible with the transcendent-yet-immanent nature of a relational God who has no favorites (Rom 2:11) and therefore does not meet attachment figure criteria.

The *economic and materialistic schema* presents an image of God based on the bestowal of wealth, affluence, and achievement, which may contribute to a hierarchical society. This schema may be recognized as the "prosperity gospel" in which God becomes an idol, worshiped to preserve the believer's prosperity and meet their selfish needs. However, under examination the prosperity gospel appears not as a gospel of

salvation, but as a gospel of wealth and health, serving the believer rather than God. The nature of this type of interaction with God is transactional, in which the believer does something to earn the attachment protection of God, rendering it insufficient.

The *political and societal schema* presents God as a champion of the oppressed, pursuing liberation and justice even to the point of violence. This image of God does not offer a God who is for everyone. It also predisposes its adherents to violent acts and behaviors which, rather than supporting secure attachment in others, has been noted to cause insecure disorganized attachment to God.

Implications for Theological Schemata of
God Images

Each of these schemata focuses on a selection of God's characteristics according to specific cultural and philosophical constructs. Some may even be helpful initially in the context of healing IWMs. However, not one presently provides an overview comprehensive enough to support a robust, defensible God schema for divine attachment. What appears to be missing from these noted schemas could be the most foundational: a biblical perspective rooted in God's self-revelation, arising naturally from Scripture rather than specific cultural or philosophical contexts or faith traditions. Developing a schema of God images based on God's self-revelation in Scripture and combined with an exploration of attachment caregiving may contribute to a viable model for healing negative God representations.

God Concepts

The fragmentation of Christianity since the Reformation into a multitude of denominations has led to the proliferation of God concepts, the explicit theological

beliefs about his nature and being that can be verbally expressed (Counted, 2015; Cummings et al., 2017; Davis et al., 2013), each embedded in a particular faith tradition and supported by a specific hermeneutic. Hall and Hall (2021) suggested that since the Reformation and its necessary and urgent focus on doctrinal matters, affective experience has been divorced from cognitive knowledge, introducing a dichotomy that ought not exist. It is possible that this state of affairs exists due to the subsequent differences between the Academy and the Church, with the Academy more occupied with cognitive matters where the Church maintained its focus on the affective quality of religious experience. Smith (2016, p. 3) asserts that this dichotomy has led to a favoring of the cognitive aspect of religiosity, reducing humans to "brains-on-a-stick" (p. 3).

Within this context, the corpus of theological literature regarding God representations deals primarily with God concepts, of which there is a multitude. While considering the Trinitarian nature of God to be foundational to understanding how God may interact with believers in an attachment relationship, the divine attachment literature does not address specific theological matters that significantly influence the coherence between God images and concepts. Counted (2015) has suggested that where there is dissonance between God images and God concepts, God concepts may exert a redemptive influence over negative God images (p. 7). This redemptive influence may be exerted by providing a cognitive model of God that communicates security, safety, and hope as free as possible from ambiguity and internal incoherence. For this reason, three major theological models of divine love are addressed in the third section of this literature survey to identify a theological perspective from which to explore God's self-revelation as an attachment caregiver (see below, Divine Love, p. 35).

God Representations and Divine Struggle

Those who have negative IWMs about God as an attachment figure or negative perceptions of their relationship with him are more likely to experience *divine struggle* (Exline et al., 2015). Researchers have observed that dissonance within the God representation contributes to divine struggle (Counted, 2015; Exline et al., 2015; Homolka, 2013; Wilt et al., 2016; Wilt et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2010; Zarzycka, 2019). As noted in chapter one, one of the major causes of divine struggle is dissonance between God images and God concepts, between affective experience and cognitive understanding. Christian experience is a holistic blend of affective experience and cognitive knowledge. The lack of attention to this holistic reality significantly contributes to the dissonance in Christian experience (Kam, 2018). Louw (2007) noted that such dissonance could be addressed in two ways: either as crisis management or as a matter to be prepared for and possibly even prevent from occurring.

These divine struggles manifest in various ways, three of which are mentioned commonly in the literature. First, people may feel anger toward God (Exline & Grubbs, 2011; Huber & Richard, 2010; Wood et al., 2010). Second, people may experience guilt or fear if they believe God thinks poorly of them (Abramowitz et al., 2002; Exline et al., 2000; Hall & Edwards, 2002; Inozu et al., 2012). Finally, they may question God's existence (Shand, 2000; Sherkat, 2008). Such negative God concepts and images foster insecure attachment, but research has shown that growth is possible but requires time, space, and unhurried contemplation of a loving God and should be engaged with a commitment to provide "corrective experiential encounters" for the express purpose of rebuilding the believer's IWMs of God (Kam, 2018, pp. 344, 346). Addressing these

matters explicitly may help individuals achieve improved psychological health and spiritual wholeness despite the misrepresentations they have endured (Counted, 2015, p. 6; Grimes, 2014, p. 27). Indeed, Cheston et al. (2003, p. 104) found a link between personal growth and God image change, indicating that change is possible with increased emotional stability achieved by participation in group therapy.

A discipleship practice that has the power to address the dissonance between God images and God concepts by helping individuals manage faith-related crises and also prepare for (and perhaps prevent) future challenges requires an interpretation of the matter in such a way that God's love is revealed "irrespective of the errors of the authorities of the past [that small error at the beginning of the path]" (Counted, 2015, p. 6). Exploring God concepts based on God's self-revelation as an attachment figure in biblical canon and combining those God concepts with an understanding of attachment caregiving would enable individuals to self-regulate anxious thoughts and other crisis-related behaviors associated with times of difficulty (Counted, 2015; Kam, 2018; Knight & Sibcy, 2018). In other words, an explicit interdisciplinary focus on God representations—God images and God concepts—could aid in times of divine crisis. Blending divine love theology and attachment theory may also help individuals prepare for future crises and possibly even prevent them.

Implications

The quality of divine attachment is affected by both God images and God concepts, evidenced by the affective and cognitive effects experienced by the attachment seeker (Kirkpatrick, 2005). Positive God images and God concepts have been associated with positive models of self and of others, leading to stronger IWMs; negative God

images and God concepts have been associated with poor models of self and of God. Images of God as loving, forgiving, and kind promote healthy attachment-seeking behaviors and, ultimately, secure attachment to God; images of God as wrathful, cruel, punishing, and distant predispose an individual to divine struggle and insecure attachment. As a result, God representations are becoming increasingly important subject matter in the fields of religion, practical theology, pastoral counseling, and psychology. Kosarkova et al. (2020) found that those who have experienced any type of childhood trauma were less likely to possess positive God representations but that actively acquiring a positive God representation helps them through the process of recovery, improves their ability to cope with traumatic memories, and may fulfill their quest for the attachment features of security and safe haven. These findings may be extrapolated to the role of rebuilding God representations.

The God representations formed by interaction with parents will to some extent be flawed because humans are sinners and God is not. Therefore, this project recommends that God's self-revelation in Scripture be studied from the perspective of objective fact.

Models of Divine Attachment

As noted above, Kaufman (1981) stated that attachment is a characteristic of human nature and that God is absolutely adequate as an attachment figure. Both observations have made the study of religion as an attachment process another natural progression of Bowlby's work. Kirkpatrick (1992, 1994, 2005) embedded this idea in his formative psychology of religion, believing attachment to be the most robust psychological framework for exploring and explaining religion and religious processes (see also Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). From the perspective of the psychology of

religion, applying human models of attachment to the divine is not straightforward due to the lack of physical proximity and the impossibility of empirically measuring God's attachment caregiving (Kirkpatrick, 2005, p. 57). However, by employing Bowlby's (1998) concept of psychological proximity in place of physical, Kirkpatrick was able to explore individual differences in attachment to God. He suggested two models of divine attachment: correspondence and compensation. Other researchers have subsequently tested and confirmed these models (Granqvist, 1998; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Granqvist et al., 2010; Hall, Fujikawa, Halcrow, Hill, et al., 2009; McDonald et al., 2005).

Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) developed two hypotheses to explain attachment to God based on the quality of the early child-parent attachment relationship. The *compensation hypothesis* proposed that certain beliefs about God, most notably that he is personal, loving, and available, cause some individuals to perceive of God as a substitute for the secure attachment relationships they did not have with their early caregivers rather than as an attachment figure in his own right (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, p. 320). The *correspondence hypothesis* proposed that IWMs of early relationships are the foundation of future human attachment relationships and attachment relationships with God (p. 320). Results of studies of both hypotheses have shown more support for the compensation pathway than correspondence, leading to seemingly contradictory conclusions. Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (1999) suggested that perhaps each pathway might be compatible with different features of attachment theory, with compensation perhaps being more applicable longitudinally and correspondence more contemporaneously (p. 926). While maintaining the compensation hypothesis as originally formulated, Granqvist (1998) proposed that the

54

correspondence model may be better understood as the result of socialization processes in which an individual's attachment to God corresponds with the attachment figure's level of religiousness (p. 266). Granqvist and Hagekull (1999) found that secure attachment to both parents was positively associated with socialized religiousness, and insecure attachment was negatively related, indicating that the intergenerational transmission of religious values is likely to be more successful among the securely attached. Several subsequent studies have supported this conclusion (Davis et al., 2013; Granqvist, 1998; Granqvist et al., 2010; Hall, Fujikawa, Halcrow, & Hill, 2009; Zarzycka, 2019).

While encouraging, the suggested models have developed as representations of human attachments while, theologically speaking, risking reductionism. Miner (2007) noted that "psychological theories of attachment to God have developed as analogues of human attachments with little attention paid to ways in which God might be different from human attachment figures" (p. 112). She adds that they "lack a clear presentation of the God to whom humans are supposed to attach" (p. 115). This, however, does not diminish the contribution psychologists of religion have made. There is undoubtedly a role for such models of God as an attachment figure as they may sufficiently explain early discipleship experiences. Instead, these observations invite a theological, rather than psychological, exploration of God as an attachment figure and the possibility of another pathway for attachment to him. The available divine attachment literature may benefit and be complemented by a biblically objective theological analysis of God's attachment behaviors.

As with human attachments, attachment to God may not function solely for the human seeking security and safety from him; it may also be the foundation of a healthy,

ongoing, affectionally bonded relationship with God independent of attachment needs for security or safety. Schaller (2007) suggested that when secure attachment is addressed explicitly, it creates not only a specific sense of security linked to a specific attachment figure but also an overall sense of security. Such a sense of security is the environment in which healthy relationships of all types may flourish (p. 191).

While existing psychology of religion research has made a strong case for God as an attachment figure, these contributions have been based on cognitive and relational theories based on human attachments rather than theological evidence (Hall & Hall, 2021; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Knabb & Pelletier, 2014). The need for a theological perspective has been recognized by few, and there is no clear direction in which to proceed. One study has called for the integration of attachment with Christian tradition (Knabb & Pelletier, 2014), while others have recommended a Trinitarian perspective (Houser & Welch, 2013; Miner, 2007). Presently, there is no research that explores God as an attachment figure from a canonical perspective based on commitments he makes, as recorded in Scripture.

Psychologists of religion recognize that God representations influence how people perceive God and how he relates to his creation (Cassibba et al., 2008; Exline et al., 2015). Theologians, particularly over the last few decades, have been exploring God's interactions with the world but not necessarily how such interactions influence religious experience (Baines et al., 2015; Dolezal, 2019; Griffin, 2000; Hasker, 2000; Howell, 2000; Lister, 2013; Oord, 2019; Peckham, 2015; Rice, 2000; Wheeler, 2000). This study will propose divine attachment as a resetting of God concepts with the canonical data of

divine self-revelation. This will allow for the reinforming of God images and rebuilding IWMs of God.

Divine Love

In the past two decades, the need for a more robust theological contribution to divine attachment has been recognized. Miner (2007), acknowledging this, stated that "a theological framework is particularly important if psychology is to interact with any confessional theological position, one which assumes the existence of, and the revealed nature of, God" (p. 112). In attachment literature, the God of the Bible has been recognized as a relational God (Miner, 2007, p. 115) who meets the criteria of an attachment figure offering proximity, safety, and security (Clinton & Straub, 2010; Granqvist et al., 2012; Hall, Fujikawa, Halcrow, Hill, et al., 2009; Hall & Hall, 2021; Kaufman, 1981; Kirkpatrick, 1992; Miner et al., 2014; Stirrup, 2011). As beings created in the image of God, our capacity for attachment—human or divine—is derived from this relational God (Boccia, 2011; Houser & Welch, 2013). Given that Scripture reveals that God's relational nature is love (1 John 4:8) and that he loves humans (Jer 31:3, John 3:16), and also that secure attachments are characterized by a quality of love that contributes positively to relationships (Bowlby, 1997; Saribay & Andersen, 2007), an exploration of the nature of divine love as a component of divine attachment should be foundational to any theological framework for divine attachment.

Models of God and divine love, while they cannot possibly be exhaustive due to the ineffable nature of the divine, may be understood in part by the communication of some form of similarity between God and humans (Neville, 2013, p. 19). Though humans cannot be said to *be* love in the way God is, to love and be loved is part of the human

experience, and love is an attachment relationship. This concept of love, combined with the concept of humans as *imago Dei*, provides a form of similarity from which an exploration and assessment of his self-revelation as the ultimate attachment figure may be undertaken.

The idea that God loves human beings is uncontested in Christianity; what is contested is the nature of his love, and this has led to considerable controversy. It is not an inconsequential dispute: Peckham (2015) recognized that "the impact of underlying ontological and metaphysical views of the dominant theological conceptions of love is difficult to overstate" (p. 249). It is also difficult to overstate the influence of such underlying views on the concept of divine attachment. The insecure divine attachment some believers experience may be traced to dissonance created by theological models of divine love, whether implicit or explicit, that cannot support the realities of divine attachment. Therefore, a theological exploration of divine attachment deserves an investigation of models of divine love to identify one that harmonizes God's self-revelation with the qualities inherent to an attachment figure. Three broad models will be identified, described, and appraised below.

The Trinitarian Nature of Divine Love

The God of the Bible has been recognized as an attachment figure who presents himself to his creation seeking relationship in love, offering proximity, safety, and security (Kaufman, 1981; Miner, 2007; Stirrup, 2011). The capacity for attachment—human or divine—is derived from a relational God who created humans in his image to enjoy loving personal relationships (Boccia, 2011; Greggo, 2007; Houser & Welch, 2013). In addition to identifying the characteristics of divine love that best support God

as an attachment figure, it is also helpful to be reminded that these characteristics of God are embedded in his Trinitarian nature.

Love, understood as other-centeredness, is a natural longing for connection that manifests in intersubjective relationship. "Human longing for God is a result of an innate God-given capacity to pursue relationships" (Miner, 2007, p. 119), but this longing is unrequited if God is not relational. Further developing this idea, Catherine Mowry LaCugna (1991) wrote:

> The deep yearning and desire for God we find in our hearts is more intelligible if that desire is rooted in the very nature of God, that is, if God, too, yearns for and desires another, not out of need or lack but out of plenitude of love. Love by its nature is outgoing and self-giving. Love is never disinterested or casual but always particular and fervent. Love seeks attachment and affiliation, never fragmentation, solitariness or autonomy (p. 353).

If God were a solitary being, love could not be fundamental to his identity (Ty Gibson, 2020, p. 184). As Trinity, he can engage in mutual, other-centered, self-giving love (Boccia, 2011, p. 25). He seeks relationship, yearning for reciprocal (but asymmetric) connection with his creatures so that he might meet their deepest needs for closeness, safety, and security. Only a relational God can meet these needs, and only a Trinitarian model makes it possible. The nature of God as Trinity suggests that he can be known in part by direct experience with each of the members. The Father, as love, may be known through biblical revelation and by the works of the Son; the Son may be known by his works as recorded in Scripture; and the Spirit may be known by his presence with and work in the believer as the mediator of God's truth and promises (Gunton, 1985, p. 143). We can come to know God through his entry into this world in Jesus; we can communicate with God and be open to him because his Spirit makes communication possible.

59

The entire plan of salvation confirms this with its multiple and various manifestations. While the roles of the Father and Son are ongoing, the Spirit's work has been and continues to be especially noteworthy since Pentecost: "The Spirit, acting as the agent of the Father, holds each person in relationship just as a mother would hold her newborn in relationship even before they can develop patterns of attunement" (Miner, 2007, p. 119). Then, once those patterns of attunement are developed, he works to infuse each person's psychospiritual needs with divine revelation.

Explicit Models of Divine Love

Three Models

The survey of the divine love literature has identified three primary models, which may be briefly defined as follows: the transcendent-voluntarist, espoused by strict classical theism; the immanent-experientialist, held by strict process panentheism; and the canonical, proffered by covenantal theism.

The *transcendent-voluntarist* model of divine love finds its place in classical theism, which subscribes vigorously to "historic, creedal, supernatural Christianity" (Huffman & Johnson, 2002, p. 29), which integrates prominent streams of Greek philosophy with some biblical concepts. According to many of its proponents, this model was the orthodox belief for centuries. Its doctrines of God's total sovereignty, self-sufficiency, transcendence, necessity, simplicity, timelessness, immutability, impassibility, omnipotence, and omniscience (Lister, 2013, p. 184) were developed to honor and protect the Creator-creature distinction, emphasizing that God is supremely other than humans. This model has been subjected to sustained criticism by academic theologians and Christian philosophers in the last century. Classical theists have mounted

such a rigorous defense in response that the defining doctrines of this model have experienced a resurgence in the past few decades (Sanders, 2017).

Especially in the past several decades, academics and philosophers have strongly questioned whether it is appropriate to conceive of God in such an "austere and exalted" manner as presented by classical theists (Sanders, 2017, p. 47). The development of the *immanent-experientialist* model grew out of philosophical, theological, and experiential opposition to the transcendent-voluntarist model (Griffin, 2000; Howell, 2000; Oord, 2019; Pinnock et al., 1994), characterizing divine love as in need of the world, immanent, bound by time like the world, changeable, passible, and lacking omnipotence, and omniscience. Like transcendent-voluntarism, this model relies heavily on philosophy with some appeal to biblical texts.

In response to the impasse created by the polarity of the other two models, the *canonical* model gives the biblical canon, accepted as "divinely revealed, inspired and preserved," the opportunity to speak authoritatively on theological matters (Peckham, 2015, p. 46). Accordingly, it has not been developed according to the same process as the previous two. Instead, Peckham attempted to reverse the process, setting aside "as much as possible, ontological presuppositions" (p.45). He asked two research questions about divine love: "(a) What is the theology depicted in (rather than behind) the text?" and (b) "What does all of the canonical data depict when taken together as a cohesive literary document in its final form?" (p. 51). This model examines God's love from a biblical perspective which, though it contains elements of the other two models, has been derived from Scripture with no appeal to philosophy.

Five Criteria of Divine Love

Five attributes of God's love and their implications for divine attachment are surveyed according to these major models. The following questions are asked of each:

1. Does God love all out of necessity, or does he choose to love some or all freely? The answer to this question will indicate whether God provides attachment caregiving to all or only to a select few.

2. Is God's love arbitrary? Can he appreciate and receive value, or does he only create and bestow value? This result will specify whether God's participation in an attachment relationship is unilateral (caregiving only) or bilateral (mutually valuable).

3. Is God's love affectionate in such a way that expresses his concern for all? This conclusion will identify whether God has the emotional capacity to provide attentive, sensitive, and responsive attachment caregiving.

4. Is God's love conditional or unconditional? This answer will show whether God's attachment caregiving is freely available to all or whether there is something humans have to do to make themselves worthy of attachment caregiving from God.

5. Can God be in a reciprocal love relationship with humans? This finding will specify whether it is possible for God to enter into a bilateral attachment relationship with humans.

While there are nuanced positions along the spectrum of each characteristic of divine love, it is impossible to engage every exemplar of each of these three positions in this short work. Instead, the goal is to highlight the major commitments these exemplars

make to specific qualities of divine love in relation to their applicability to divine attachment. The answers provided by each generalized model are identified, briefly discussed, and appraised below to determine which renders a theological understanding of divine love such that God, Kaufman's ultimate attachment figure, is capable of providing attachment caregiving in a way that fosters secure attachment.

Is God's love volitional?

The transcendent-voluntarist model maintains that God's love for others is strictly volitional (Helm, 2001). He loves everyone freely but arbitrarily chooses to love only some with a special salvation-bestowing love (Helm, 2008, p. 23), such that "apostasy is impossible" (Feinberg, 1986, p. 35). In contrast, the immanent-experientialist model holds that the world is ontologically necessary to God's existence, and his love is a result of that necessary relationship (Oord, 2010, p. 114). His love for the world is universal, fully bestowed on all, regardless of how the world chooses to respond to it. Because God's love is universal, salvific love is not obtained by divine election; people can choose to love Him in return and benefit from it (Reichenbach, 1986, p. 119; Sanders, 2008, p. 202). The canonical model posits that God's love is volitional in that he chooses to love the world freely but not in a way that binds him to any specific course of action or behavior outside of that which he promises, or that to which he morally binds himself. He bestows upon humans not just his love but also the freedom to love him in return or not, ruling out the concept of unilateral election love. Instead, election love results from a bilateral or reciprocal love relationship between God and humans (Peckham, 2015, p. 101).

The concept of divine attachment is best supported by an understanding of divine love that allows for God's love to be volitional in nature, permitting him to love not because it is necessary to his existence but because he freely chooses to do so and is genuinely interested in a love relationship with humans whom he created with the free will to choose to love him in return. Attachment caregiving, then, as an extension of God's love, is a relational behavior that God chooses to engage in with humans, giving them the freedom to seek attachment to him, rather than forcing his attachment caregiving on them.

Is God's love evaluative?

In transcendent-voluntarism, God is perfectly self-sufficient (Dolezal, 2017, p. 15). Having need of nothing, he always gives love. Because he cannot benefit from his creation, he does not receive love. He therefore does not take delight in his creatures or anything else beyond himself. In contrast, from the perspective that the world is essential to the nature of God and is, therefore, part of God, the immanent-experientialist model holds that his love is entirely and necessarily evaluative: he bestows his love freely and is enriched in his being by the love he receives from his creation (Sanders, 2008, p. 197). He is affected by the world as the ultimate feeler of all feelings, involuntarily benefitting from and suffering along with his creatures (Oord, 2010, p. 75). The canonical model suggests that God's love is evaluative but in a voluntary fashion. There is ample canonical evidence that he does take pleasure in his creation but his being is not necessarily dependent on his interactions with it (Peckham, 2015, p. 118). He enjoys his creation but might also be grieved by certain of their actions or behaviors.

A sustainable model of divine attachment benefits from an understanding of God's love as freely bestowed, not as a condition of his being. As an extension of his love, God's attachment caregiving must be of such a quality that allows him to freely delight in humans, to receive value from them, and to be affected by their joys and delights, and trials and tribulations, but not in a way that renders him helpless or subject to being overcome. The canonical model presents an understanding of this attribute most conducive for application to divine attachment.

Is God's love emotional?

The transcendent-voluntarist model asserts that God is perfect, without passion; he cannot experience changes in his being or his emotional state either by choice or external interference (Baines & Garrick, 2015, p. 111), else he would cease to be perfect (Baines & Rennie, 2015, p. 396). In contrast, the God of the immanent experientialist model is supremely emotional due to his nature. Because emotions are intrinsic to his being, God is necessarily affected by the world. (Oord, 2019, p. 136). The canonical model presents an understanding of the emotional nature of God's love that allows him to voluntarily open himself to being affected by the world, responding to his creation in always appropriate ways (Peckham, 2015, p. 189).

Divine attachment, no less a deep affectional bond than any human attachment, must be emotional to the degree that it allows God to be affected, but not overwhelmed, by attachment seekers' needs while maintaining rationality and stability to provide for those needs. Again, the canonical model offers a more attachment-appropriate understanding of this attribute.

Is God's love unconditional?

The transcendent-voluntarist model asserts that God's love is unconditional based on his immutable, sovereign will rather than anything creaturely (Baines & Rennie, 2015, p. 397). In a rare case of agreement with the transcendent-voluntarist model, the immanent-experientialist model also maintains that God's love is unconditional and impossible to forfeit but for an opposite reason: unconditional love is an essential part of God's being, rather than being a decision dependent on his sovereign will (Griffin, 2000, p. 18). In an interesting departure from the other models, the canonical model presents evidence that there is more to the unconditional/conditional discussion of God's love than either of the other models can adequately address. Peckham (2015, p. 191) coined the term *foreconditional* to refer to the biblical data on this position and defined it as an unmerited love that precedes conditions but is not exclusive of them. Humans have the freedom to respond to this unmerited love and to enter into a reciprocal relationship with God, at which point the nature of his election love becomes dependent on human response.

The canonical model again provides the best understanding of this particular attribute for the purpose of divine attachment because it suggests that divine attachment caregiving, so closely related to divine love, may also be foreconditional. It is available to all before they even know they need it. While freely bestowed at the attachment seeker's acceptance of the foreconditional provision, the quality of attachment seeking may be affected by later decisions, which rules out the unconditional position of the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models. The God of the canonical model is presented as a caregiver who will provide safety and security freely and

unconditionally, respecting the attachment seeker's response. His sovereign choice to love and, by extension, to provide attachment caregiving is perfectly balanced with creaturely free will.

Is God's love reciprocal?

In the transcendent-voluntarist model, God is only ever the giver of love, never a recipient; always the benefactor, never the beneficiary (Dolezal, 2017, p. 12). This makes a reciprocal relationship between God and humans impossible. In contrast, the immanent-experientialist model holds that God loves universally within a *necessarily* reciprocal relationship with humans (Sanders, 2008, p. 202). According to the canonical model, God's love is *ideally* reciprocal: God loves freely and desires that humans choose to love him in return, but he does not compel them (Peckham, 2015, p. 227). An ideally reciprocal relationship between God and humans is necessarily asymmetrical, owing to the ontological differences between Creator and creature.

Attachment scholars and researchers have suggested that attachment relationships are reciprocal in nature (Seifer & Schiller, 1995; Simpson et al., 2020). Reciprocity in attachment relationships has been recognized as possible and desirable, especially as it helps build resilience in the attachment seeker (Belsky & Fearon, 2016). Starky (1999, p. 26) recognized that attachment theory is supported by theologies that emphasize reciprocity in relationships with God. Knabb and Emerson (2013), asserting that the human need for redemption and restoration can be best understood in terms of a restored attachment bond with God, insist that such a bond is represented throughout Scripture as reciprocal: God pursues humankind, waiting patiently (sometimes even pleading) for them to choose to return to him (p. 839). On the other hand, a God who loves and desires

a reciprocal though asymmetrical relationship with his creatures and accepts their love despite the inferior and asymmetrical nature of said love does meet the criteria (Peckham, 2015, p. 220).

Evaluation of the Three Models

In summary, though the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models arrive at their conclusions about the love of God by employing the method of reasoning from ontological presuppositions to characteristics and qualities of divine love, they suggest "mutually exclusive conceptions of love . . . amounting to a fundamental impasse" (Peckham, 2015, p. 45) and cannot support the concept of God as an absolutely adequate attachment figure. The strictest interpretation of the transcendent-voluntarist model presents a God whose love is purely volitional, nonevaluative, unemotional, unconditional, and unilateral. The immanent-experientialist model offers his love as involuntary because the world is essential to his nature, nonevaluative, supremely emotional, unconditional, and bilateral. Though other models take various positions on the same spectrum, because of the inherent opposition, they do not lend themselves to or enjoy the ultimate defensibility of the models at the ends of the spectrum; some of their assertions suffer logical inconsistency or simply do not cohere. It would appear that a potentially preferable way forward is through a new model, which includes biblical data as "the primary source of knowledge of the divine" (Miner, 2007, p. 114). With its inverted method of inquiry, the canonical model presents a new paradigm by which divine love may be understood. Biblical data are examined and permitted to define aspects of divine love, which are then the foundations for divine ontology. The canonical model presents a model of divine love in which God is transcendent yet immanent,

68

relational, and whose love in relation to the world is volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and ideally reciprocal, allowing for greater support of divine attachment than the other models.

Three characteristics of the canonical model of divine love support the concept of God as an attachment figure better than other models. First, it does not assume that seemingly opposite divine character traits are necessarily dichotomous. Second, where the other models seem to require diametric opposition, the canonical model allows for layers, distinctions, and subtleties of divine love to shine new light on the nature of divine love and divine ontology. Finally, all five characteristics considered overlap significantly in this model, making it the most coherent of the three as a foundation for this proposed study. The canonical model is the one that will be employed in the proposed theological-psychological model of divine love for discipleship.

Summary

This chapter explored three literatures: attachment theory and research, divine attachment theory and research, and divine love. The survey of attachment theory summarized its history and described its applications and extensions. The divine attachment theory survey provided an understanding of how God came to be seen as an attachment figure, described how belief in God as an attachment figure impacts believers, and identified a gap in the literature. Finally, the survey of the divine love literature described common God image schemas and three cognitive theological models of divine love, and explained how each influences the concept of God as an attachment figure.

It has been shown in the survey of attachment literature that attachment theory is an enduring framework for understanding many facets of the human experience,

expanding far beyond its initial application to include, among many others, relationships with God. However, the understanding of the experience of God as an attachment figure is presently limited to the believer's perception which is heavily (though not necessarily incorrectly) influenced by subjectivity and presuppositions aligned with varying philosophical positions. Because the IWMs of attachment styles may change over the course of the lifespan and in response to variations in sensitive caregiving by alternate attachment figures, it stands to reason that insecure attachment experiences with God may be remedied. A canonical model of divine love that is supportive of divine attachment paired with a canonical exploration of divine utterances that indicate the quality of his attachment caregiving may initiate significant positive change in the God images and God concepts that inform IWMs of divine attachment. As a result, religious and spiritual experiences may be improved, thereby positively impacting discipleship and religious education practices. Such a holistic model may also provide therapeutic insight for psychologists of religion and counselors.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL

COMMITMENTS

Introduction

The idea undergirding this research is that the quality of divine attachment

caregiving should not be evaluated exclusively by the perception of the attachment

seeker. Instead, divine attachment caregiving should also be considered using a

qualitative assessment of God's attention, sensitivity, and responsiveness to human needs.

This study aimed to explore biblical data for evidence of divine utterance, which may be

interpreted as God self-identifying as a secure attachment provider. This task was

theoretical and theological in nature and employed a distinctly theological method in

collecting and reporting data.

In studying human attachment relationships, attachment caregiving qualities and

their influences are observable and may be identified, classified, and described. However,

the study of divine attachment is not as straightforward: God is not physically available to

observe while engaged in attachment caregiving, complicating the identification,

classification, and description of his attachment-providing behaviors. Evidence of the

quality of God's caregiving must be sought in other ways and by other means. I explored

the Christian biblical canon for that evidence as a function of my context.

Primary Presuppositions

While there are many other contexts, worldviews, and perspectives from which this research could be explored, I engaged the material from a Protestant Christian perspective. My perspective provides two valuable influences on my interpretation of biblical data: cosmic conflict and covenant.

While it is beyond the scope and purpose of this project to address the matter thoroughly, I believe God is embroiled in a cosmic conflict that had its origins in heaven in eternity past. I accept that this conflict was extended to earth (Rev 12:9), that the first created beings fell (Gen 3:6), and that humanity has been suffering the consequences since (Rom 5:12). The primary consequence of the Fall recognized by this research is that of the relational rupture between humans and God (Isa 59:1-2). My perspective asserts that God is neither the source of evil nor does he wish to sustain it. Instead, God is responding to a creaturely rebellion in specific and measured ways, according to a plan (1 Pet 1:18-20). I find that the cosmic conflict motif minimally outlined by John Peckham[1] offers a satisfactory explanation for the existence and amount of evil and suffering present in the world. The importance of this presupposition for canonical research into divine attachment is in that it provides a plausible explanation for insecure divine attachment and a template for treating it.

Related to my belief in the cosmic conflict is the plan of salvation. I believe God offers salvation from the cosmic conflict to all humans, not just a chosen few, in the form of a two-way volitional covenant relationship which was planned before the creation of

---

[1] For detail beyond the scope of this dissertation, see *Theodicy of love: Cosmic conflict and the problem of evil,* by J. Peckham, 2018, Baker Academic.

this world (John 1:29). Though an in-depth treatment of this topic also is beyond the scope and purpose of this project, the broad contours of my position have been captured in significant multiauthor research.[2] The value my belief in a plan of salvation adds to this study lies in the concept that a secure divine-human attachment relationship may be seen through the same lens, attachment being a function of covenant relationship.

Theological Commitments

Divine Love

I maintain that divine love is foundational to this project as it provides the ultimate contextualization for interpreting biblical texts, especially those that reveal something of the character of God. Three concepts undergird my presupposition. First, God is love (1 John 4:8). Second, secure attachment is innate to love relationships (Boccia, 2011). Third, our love response to God is preceded by God's love toward us. (1 John 4:19). While there is much beyond the scope of this research that could be said about divine love,[3] based on this minimal conceptualization, I believe that God is interested in the secure attachment of humans and that, like divine love, divine attachment caregiving precedes our attachment seeking.

Objections may be raised that God does not provide the quality of love necessary to support secure attachment based on canonical evidence of divine anger, wrath, and executive judgments. Biblical scholars and theologians have suggested multiple viable

---

[2] For a deeper insight into the soteriology undergirding this dissertation, see *Salvation: Contours of Adventist soteriology,* by M. Hanna, D. Jankiewicz, & J. Reeve (Eds.), 2018, Andrews University Press.

[3] For an example of in-depth scholarship on the topic of divine love, see *The love of God: A Canonical Model,* by J. Peckham, 2015, IVP Academic.

avenues for treating these objections,[4] but addressing them is beyond the scope of this project. I do not deny that there is scriptural evidence that God's judgments against evil bring suffering and even death upon humans; however, canonical depictions of God as wrathful and vengeful fail to account for many other depictions of him as loving, merciful, and patient toward humans. While I do not accept that anger is God's primary attitude toward humans, I believe it is an appropriate love response to evil and suffering (Peckham, n.d., p. 5). I maintain that negative depictions of God cohere with the cosmic conflict motif and are consistent with the biblical portrayal of divine love, interest, attentiveness, sensitivity, and responsiveness presupposed for this project.

Biblical Canon

I hold a high view of Scripture, accepting that God is the ultimate author of the biblical canon, and the Holy Spirit inspired humans to be co-authors (2 Tim 3:16). I accept as biblical canon the 66 books accepted by most Christian traditions, holding it to be sufficient in and of itself as a source and guide for theology and theological pursuits (Canale, 2001, p. 384). Accordingly, I have chosen to privilege canonical data over other extra-biblical sources. I do not believe my opinion dismisses the diversity of approaches to Scripture, but I do think that this presupposition provides the best approach for this study of divine attachment.

---

[4] Examples of respected scholarship on this topic include *God at war: The Bible and spiritual conflict,* by G. A. Boyd, 1997, InterVarsity Press; *Theodicy of love: Cosmic conflict and the problem of evil,* by J. Peckham, 2018, Baker Academic; and *The destruction of the Canaanites: God, genocide, and biblical interpretation,* by C. Trimm, 2022, Eerdmans.

Scriptural Correspondence

I believe that the divine authorship of Scripture indicates that purpose and intent are embedded in the biblical canon. Close, continued study may discover and interpret this intent without exhausting the material. Accordingly, I do not hold that this research is the final word on divine attachment but that it remains open to modification as the purpose and intent are unfolded by the Spirit.

Internal Coherence of Scripture

I accept the canon as an internally consistent document in which coherence between the diversity of texts may be found without minimizing or dismissing other texts or passages. This commitment allowed me, in my reading of the canon and in collecting and considering the data, to seek harmony between all the relevant texts and passages without discounting or rejecting any individual texts or passages.

The Role of Language

I hold that to learn about God, it is appropriate to consider not only the witness of the human co-authors of Scripture but also how God presents himself, which means "attending to what God does, not least by means of speaking" (Vanhoozer, 2010, p. 36). I am aware that there are many philosophical positions regarding divine communication that could be addressed here;[5] however, I limited my interaction with them to the concept that God has graciously revealed himself through the medium of human language which, though it cannot perfectly portray all that God is, does so as accurately as human

---

[5] For a summary, see *Remythologizing theology: Divine action, passion, and authorship,* by K. J. Vanhoozer, 2010, Cambridge University Press.

language is capable of capturing. Therefore, I maintain that divine utterance is the ultimate source of objective information about God and that attributes found in divine self-revelations are accurate depictions of divine nature, not merely human projections or reductions.

Divine Emotion

The language of biblical canon is taken to be the best possible expression of divine truths God wished to communicate with humans, despite the inherent limitations and risks associated with language. Where God is recorded as speaking directly to the inspired human co-author, especially while revealing divine emotion, I interpret God's words as theopathic rather than anthropopathic. This position allows God to speak subjectively but authentically of himself, manifesting through his words the intentional and honest expressions of the divine heart toward humanity. Additionally, it minimizes the projection of human emotions and emotional management onto God and prevents the reduction of divine emotion to a state essentially indistinguishable from human emotion. As such, I accept that God reveals his nature capably, truthfully, and as comprehensively as human language can accommodate such revelation. To make this case, I need not understand the "precise nature or operation of divine emotions" (Peckham, 2015b, p. 355).

Human Nature

I hold it to be true that human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27) but that the divine image in humans has been marred as a result of sin (Gen 3:6). While it is not the purpose of this research to explore the nature of the *imago Dei* in humans, I presuppose that humans bear that image relationally (among other ways). This

position allows for at least minimal correspondence between human-human and divine-human relationships, which is necessary for this project.

I believe that human nature is wholistic; I reject body-soul dualism. Accordingly, I hold that all human experience, including (and perhaps especially) spiritual experience, is fully embodied. While important to this project, a specific treatment of this presupposition extends far beyond the scope of the work at hand.[6]

Relational Typology

The decision to use attachment theory as the lens through which to interpret specific instances of divine utterance in Scripture should not be understood as imposing a philosophy upon Scripture in contradiction to the chosen methodology. Instead, based on the presuppositions noted above, I believe attachment theory provides the basic contours of what might be labeled divine attachment rather than minute details that might demand direct correspondence. My final theological presupposition is that I accept that observations of positive human relational behaviors, specifically secure attachment in this case, have their origin and perfection in the divine nature (Davidson, 2022, p. 1348). Therefore, I believe secure human attachment is a *type* of divine attachment and that, in light of this presupposition, attachment theory is a valid, specific minimal framework by which I can contextualize certain divine utterances.

---

[6] For more on this concept, I recommend *The physical nature of Christian life,* by W. Brown & B. Strawn, 2012, Cambridge University Press, and *Body, soul, and human life: The nature of humanity in the Bible,* by J. Green, 2008, Baker Academic.

Methodological Commitments

While exploring models of divine love, it became apparent that particular methodological commitments must be made to this project. It is true in this case that "methodology often drives dissertations in biblical studies" (Porter & Studebaker, 2018, p. 4): The application of any other methods to this project would yield very different insights.

Canonical Method

The canonical method (Peckham, 2016) was chosen because, more than other methodologies considered, it prioritizes the entire biblical canon and permits all parts of the canon to contribute to the interpretation of concepts rather than leaving interpretation in the hands of the researcher or under the influence of philosophy and tradition. In harmony with my belief that truth is ever unfolding, the canonical method requires the reader-researcher to continually submit her horizon to that of Scripture, seeking to understand data from the biblical perspective. This means that my interpretation of the data was informed by the data I collected. Considering the model of divine love I am employing, the canonical method allows that God possesses attributes conducive to interpretation as attachment caregiving. Therefore, I believe this methodology provides the best chance for the data to be congruent with my assumptions.

Primacy of Canon

Despite the variety of opinions on the role of biblical canon, philosophy, and tradition, I believe the biblical canon is the most credible source for Christian doctrine. I believe in the primacy of the biblical canon over tradition, philosophy, and experience, making it the preeminent and preferred source of data available for this research. I do not

believe this dismisses or discounts the diversity of approaches to understanding Scripture, but I do think that this particular approach makes the most sense for this study of divine attachment.

<center>Divine Attachment Theory</center>

The view that God is plausible as an attachment figure does exist in theological discourse (Kaufman, 1981; Miner, 2007). However, neither the term *attachment* nor definitions of *secure base* and *safe haven* are explicitly found in biblical canon, and no attempts are made to assert that they can be. The definitions of secure base and safe haven employed in this research include but are not limited to the commonly held definitions offered by psychologists of religion. This approach recognizes that God may demonstrate secure base and safe haven caregiving behaviors in ways that go beyond human attachment caregiving. This minimal approach permits canonical data to describe God's attachment behaviors and functions.

<center>Method of Investigation</center>

Attachment caregiving behaviors were identified according to the behaviors identified in attachment literature, namely secure base and safe haven. For this project, secure base was minimally defined as providing security that leads to exploration away from the attachment caregiver. Safe haven was minimally defined as attachment caregiving that provides relief from stress and duress. Neither behavior was strictly limited to these definitions, allowing for potential additional data to be observed and collected.

<center>79</center>

I conducted an inductive reading of the entire biblical canon,[7] identifying instances of divine utterance in which God self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as demonstrating secure base and safe haven behaviors. The presence of secure base behavior was determined by noting whether instances of divine utterance include evidence of God self-representing in a way that may be interpreted as being a supportive presence from which humans may go out and explore. Similarly, the presence of safe haven behavior was determined by assessing divine utterance for evidence that God self-identifies in ways that may be interpreted as providing safe haven for humans to return to in times of stress and duress.

<div align="center">Presentation of Canonical Data</div>

The presented data are not inclusive of all that was collected; more could be presented in this limited project. I selected only those instances of divine utterance that met the minimal definitions of secure base and safe haven behaviors I brought to the project. As patterns of divine behavior and commitment emerged from the collected data, other categories were created to further define the quality of divine attachment.

While there are other views on God, divine emotion, human nature, and attachment theory the reader may wish to consider instead, these are the known, relevant presuppositions I brought to this project. Of course, I do not insist that readers believe as I do or even agree with me; I ask only that they consider the data collected within the contours defined by these presuppositions.

---

[7] I used the NASB20 English translation. One need not prefer the same text; this study does not hinge on this or any other particular translation. I felt that it offers the closest English translation of the original languages.

CHAPTER 4

CANONICAL DATA

Introduction

Much research into the phenomenon of divine attachment has been conducted by psychologists of religion, with additional contributions from a few psychiatrists, therapists, and pastoral counselors. Despite evident connections to religious and spiritual life, comparatively little has been written by theologians or biblical scholars, leaving a significant gap in the divine attachment literature. This biblical study represents a modest effort toward filling that gap by providing evidence for a canonical model of divine attachment based on divine utterance.

I do not assert that the terms attachment, secure base, and safe haven are used in the biblical canon. Neither do I assert that attachment theory is mentioned explicitly in the biblical text. I planned the research to examine divine self-revelation for evidence that minimally demonstrates that God, in light of the work done by Bowlby, Ainsworth, and other attachment researchers over the past eight decades, self-reveals that God engages in ways that might appropriately be identified as attachment caregiving behaviors. Finally, I do not assert that this study explains all that there is to know about God as an absolutely adequate attachment figure, but I do assert that it does contribute significant data to the conversation.

The first question I sought to answer was, *Is there any evidence in the biblical canon of God self-revealing that He possesses any of the qualities expected of an attachment figure that may be interpreted as demonstrating attachment caregiving behaviors*? Attachment caregiving behaviors are those that provide a secure base or a safe haven to an attachment seeker. To answer this question, God's self-revelations were examined for evidence that God provides security from which people may go or be sent out (secure base) or that God provides a quality of relief from stress and duress that people may seek him or be called to him to experience (safe haven). My inductive reading of the biblical canon yielded evidence that God does self-reveal in ways that may be interpreted as demonstrating secure base and safe haven behaviors as so defined. The collected data were coded according to the two attachment caregiving behaviors initially, then coded again when patterns emerged indicating multiple unique demonstrations of God's secure base and safe haven behaviors.

Decisions about which canonical data to include rested on four criteria. First, I examined only direct divine utterance. Only those utterances that could be interpreted as God self-revealing in ways that indicate that he engages in attachment behaviors were included. Second, where I found multiple instances of direct divine utterance related to the same story, I did not include the repetitions (such as in the case of Jesus's utterances recorded in more than one Gospel). Third, I did not include instances of quotations of divine utterance shared between humans but not recorded elsewhere in the biblical canon (such as in the case of the conversation between Deborah and Barak recorded in Judges 4). Fourth, I did not include rhetorical statements uttered by humans about God's caregiving.

After finding evidence that God does self-reveal in ways that may be interpreted as providing secure base and safe haven, I was able to answer the second question, *What does such self-revelation reveal about the nature of his attachment behavior*? I analyzed patterns that emerged during the coding of the collected data. These patterns led me to recognize "ways in which God might be different from human attachment figures" (Miner, 2007, p. 112) and to identify ways God's attachment caregiving behaviors differ from human attachment caregiving behaviors.

Only the data collected and coded is presented below. I present the Old Testament data first, followed by the New Testament data. This distinction allows for the complexity and uniqueness of Jesus' utterances to be addressed more adequately.

Canonical Data

Before presenting the canonical data that God self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as engaging in attachment behaviors, it is important that I reiterate my belief that the love of God is rooted in God's Trinitarian nature because the qualities of this love provide the most appropriate context for a canonical model of divine attachment. If God were a solitary being, love could not be fundamental to his identity (Ty Gibson, 2020); love is manifest in intersubjective relationship. Therefore, as Trinity God engages in mutual, other-centered, self-giving behaviors (Boccia, 2011). As an extension of Trinitarian love, God seeks relational connection with his creatures so that he might enjoy their companionship and meet their deepest needs for closeness, safety, and security. The relational nature of God suggests that God's creatures can know him in part by experience with each of the members of the Trinity. The Father may be known through biblical revelation and by the works of the Son; the Son may be known through his

submission to the Father's will and by his works as recorded in Scripture; and the Spirit may be known by his presence with and work in the believer as the mediator of God's truth and promises (Gunton, 1985).

This section presents canonical data that God does self-reveal in ways that may be interpreted as demonstrating secure base and safe haven behaviors and also identifies several contexts in which God exercises these behaviors.

<div align="center">Secure Base</div>

As with human attachments, divine secure base behavior requires a presence from which one may go or be sent out. In the absence of the physical presence of God, this would be the relational presence of God made manifest by the Holy Spirit (Hall & Hall, 2021; Lister, 2015). God as "Sender" is minimally attested in the theological literature (Köstenberger, 1998), as is the concept that God's sending is indicative of his presence (Duvall & Hays, 2019, p. 281; Koester, 2008, p. 33). While there is no divine utterance in Scripture in which God declares explicitly that he is a secure base from which his people may go or be sent out, there is canonical evidence of God self-revealing in ways that may be interpreted as providing secure base attachment caregiving.

My inductive reading yielded ten instances of divine utterance where God is recorded sending people out from his presence for various purposes and people responding to his command by going out or seeking to know God's will before going out. These ten instances were further coded into five categories according to the going or sending out purposes. Finally, summaries of the verses in which the divine utterances are recorded are provided. Where surrounding verses provided additional context for God's secure base behavior, the additional context is identified.

God Sends Out for Mission

Three places in the biblical canon record God sending his people out to dwell in a specific location. In the first (Gen 12:1), God spoke to Abram, calling him away from his native country, away from his extended family, and even his father's house to inaugurate God's eschatological purpose: to draw all nations to himself (Lamb, 2022, p. 82; Lister, 2015). The call was followed by promises that God would show Abram the land, that God would make him a great nation and bless him in multiple ways, and that all the families on earth would be blessed through the special covenant relationship between God and Abram (Levenson, 2016, p. 43; Peckham, 2021, p. 11). While I am not aware of any direct commentaries that support the interpretation of this text as evidence for God as a secure base, God does present himself as such, and the rest of the narrative indicates that Abram responded with trust that God would "deliver what he has offered" (Walton, 2001, p. 392).

God as a secure base is noted also in Ex 3:10, which records God telling Moses that God would send him to Pharaoh. Moses' mission would be to bring God's people out of Egypt to God himself (Ex 19:4). Later, God promised Moses that God would send and angel before the people, to get them safely to Canaan (23:20) and to drive out several of the tribes that were inhabiting the land at the time (33:2).

Joshua 1:1-5 records God's instruction to Joshua after the death of Moses, in which he commanded Joshua and all Israel to cross the Jordan and possess the land God had promised to give them. God assured Joshua that he would never forsake or fail him, just as he had never forsaken or failed Moses. This sending out with the promise of divine faithfulness affirms the idea that "the divine presence" serves the secure base

function of God's attachment caregiving, "which makes any Israelite undertaking viable" (Hubbard, 2009, pp. 94-95). "God's empowering presence" has been recognized as a "critical theme" in Israel's post-Moses era (Duvall & Hays, 2019, p. 60).

Jeremiah was "especially claimed by God" (Goldingay, 2021, p. 81) to be sent out as a prophet to the nations (Jer 1:5). That this secure base sending out behavior is intentional is demonstrated by God's admission that he chose Jeremiah before Jeremiah was conceived and ordained him to be a prophet before he was born. Secure base behavior has been part of God's purpose from before the foundation of the world.

God Sends People Out to Anoint

God's will with regard to leaders was often accomplished by the command to anoint specific individuals for specific roles. In 1 Sam 16:1, God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel. Despite Samuel's fears that Saul might seek his life, Samuel exhibited an appropriate trusting response to God's secure base caregiving. In like manner, God sent Elijah out to anoint two kings and a prophet. Receiving and acting on God's instruction, in spite of threats to his own life, evidences a level of comfort in God as a secure base and his designs for leadership in nations and religious communities (1 Kings 19:15-16).

God Sends People Out to Prophesy

God desires "a personal, encountering relationship with his people" (Duvall & Hays, 2019). In addition to entering into creation himself to foster such a relationship, God sends humans out to participate in the plan of salvation in various ways, including prophecy. First Kings 18:1 states that Elijah was sent to Ahab to prophesy on God's behalf. Though risking his life, Elijah exercised trust in God and believed in the purpose

he was sent out for. Similarly, Jonah was sent out by God to prophesy against the wickedness in Nineveh (Jonah 1:2, 3:2). Despite Jonah's resistance to the sending out and his attempts to flee from the presence of the Lord which he falsely believed was restricted to Jerusalem (Duvall & Hays, 2019, pp. 152-153), God's relational presence remained with him. God rescued him from his predicament and patiently gave him a second chance (Allen, 1976, p. 220). These stories demonstrate that God's secure base behaviors are not dependent upon human response.

God Sends Out to Preserve Life

In the narrative of the severe famine in Israel recorded in 1 Kings 17, God spoke to his prophet Elijah twice about where he should go to preserve his life. Verse three records God giving Elijah specific instructions to hide himself at the brook Cherith. After it dried up, God spoke to Elijah again, recorded in verse nine, instructing him to go to Zarephath, where God had commanded a widow to look after Elijah for the remainder of the famine. God's command that Elijah should go out is evidence of his care and concern for his people and God's proactive planning for their well-being. While no commentary in the theological literature was found to support this reading, it is included here to illustrate for contemporary individuals that God's secure base function should be matched by human trust.

God Sends Out to Go to War

At times, God is recorded sending his people to go out and enter into battle with an enemy. Judges 6:14 records that the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, commanding him to go out and deliver Israel from the Midianites. Because of Israel's distress and God's apparent lack of care for them, Gideon found it difficult to trust God

(Younger, 2002, p. 176) despite the command to go out. However, God's role as a secure base was in no way diminished by Gideon's hesitance. God's patient reassurance in response to Gideon's timidity (as with Jonah's refusal to go to Nineveh) may be interpreted as a strong demonstration of the traits that characterize God's secure base behavior. God identified himself as present with Israel and assured Gideon that God would likewise be with him (Lister, 2015, p. 208). This instance of the assurance of God's secure base behavior echoes the assurance that was given to Joshua.

Other times, God's people would ask him whether they should go out to battle. Phineas, unwilling to go out without God's direction and subsequent support, as recorded in Judg 20:28, demonstrated trust in God as a secure base when he asked God whether Israel should go to war against Benjamin. David's reliance on God for direction regarding a possible battle for Keilah, recorded in 1 Sam 23:4, highlights the fact that God embraces opportunities to be a secure base for his people when they call upon him in sincerity, even if they call upon him more than once (Tsumura, 2007, p. 550).

Summary

Based on this canonical evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that God has naturally (as part of his character) assumed, without announcement or fanfare, the role of being a secure base for his people. The qualities that define God's secure base provision may be understood as going beyond the subjective perceptions of his people and the minimal definitions employed for this research, as evidenced by the fact that God's secure base behaviors are not diminished by human resistance. Each of these instances shows that the secure base function of God's attachment caregiving is inherent to his nature. God sends his people out for mission, to anoint others for service, prophesy,

preserve life, and even go to war, often making promises simultaneously to the individuals sent out. Some of these promises are realized immediately; others are fulfilled when God's command has been obeyed. In the broader biblical record of God sending people out, nations were built, ministries were launched with supernatural endowments, sinners were warned of impending destruction, destruction was averted, lives were preserved, kings and prophets were anointed, and battles were engaged in and won in the name of God.

Research on attachment theory has found that individuals who perceive God as a secure base capable of these "sending" behaviors and more were found to be more likely to engage in theological exploration and to be more tolerant of the belief systems of others while remaining faithful to the core beliefs of their own traditions (Beck, 2006)**.** Such individuals may possibly have greater motivation to engage with the Great Commission.

<div align="center">Safe Haven</div>

Of God's attachment caregiving behaviors, safe haven identifications were almost twice as abundant as secure base identifications. Seventeen manifestations of God's safe haven behaviors were recognized and coded into seven categories. Each category is addressed below with a summary of each instance of divine utterance found, with additional context noted where it influences the understanding of the quality of God's safe haven behavior.

God Anticipates the Need for Safe Haven

God does not only declare himself to be a safe haven for his people, but he also anticipates their need for safety. God is recorded in Isa 26:20, encouraging his people to

hide themselves in actual physical safe havens until a time of danger is past. In harmony

with what may be expected of a safe haven caregiver, it has been noted that this divine

utterance speaks of "that compassion of God which has always made possible an escape

. . . for those who would avail themselves of it" (Oswalt, 1986, p. 488). In Isa 65:24, God

assures his people that before they even call upon him, he, not another, will answer

(Oswalt, 1998, p. 661) and when they are still speaking, he will already be answering.

God anticipates the needs of his people and provides the safety they need in the moment

of their extremity.

In Jer 29:12-14, the choice of verbs *go* and *plead* applied to the actions of God's

people gives the impression that the people are to actively seek safe haven where they

know God can be found (Goldingay, 2021, p. 602). God promises his people will find

him when God's people seek safe haven in him, for whatever reason. This behavior

demonstrates not just the presence of God as a safe haven but also that God's presence is

proof of his faithfulness to his promises (Lister, 2015, p. 231).

God a Sanctuary for His People

There is one place in the biblical canon where God explicitly identifies himself as

a safe haven for his people. In Ezek 11:16, God states that he was a sanctuary for a little

while for his people while they were in exile. Block (1997) reads this verse with an

interesting twist, suggesting that God was challenging, perhaps even correcting, the

people's misunderstanding of their relationship to God and the land of Israel: "Expulsion

from the land should not be interpreted as alienation from himself" (p. 349). This idea

underscores the concept of a relationship with God as a safe haven that transcends the

significance of the land and the temple, a safe haven that is more reliable despite the psychological effort required to access it.

God Is a Safe Haven for the Needy

In Ps 12:5, God is recorded as taking notice of the devastation of the afflicted and the groaning of the needy and declaring, "Now I will arise!" This utterance demonstrates "God's clear intention to answer the intercession favorably and respond to the sufferer's need" (deClaisse-Walford et al., 2014, p. 154). This behavior is precisely what may be expected of a safe haven caregiver. Similarly, in Jer 31:25, God announces that he satisfies the weary and refreshes the languishing because he "is already in the midst of providing for them abundantly" (Goldingay, 2021, p. 649). God's safe haven behavior does not require people to initiate the interaction. Taking notice of what his people are going through, calling them to him for rest, and providing the rest and safety needed are strong indicators that God functions as a safe haven (Duvall & Hays, 2019, p. 262).

God as Helper

Scripture captures God encouraging his people in a time of great stress, declaring in Isa 41:10, 13, 14 that he would be with them and help them. This orientation of God toward his people, his abiding safe haven presence, provides them "something to draw courage from" in times of distress (Duvall & Hays, 2019, p. 127). Lister (2015) suggests that this quality of verbal commitment by God "provides assurance and motivation" for his people to trust him (p. 231). In Isa 44:2, God declares himself to be the one who helps them, regardless of what they have gone through, reminding them that he "holds them in his heart" (Oswalt, 1998, p. 166). God's stated desire that his people should not fear and his affirmation that he is their helper provides a safe haven during stressful situations.

91

God as Comforter

In Isaiah, God identifies himself as one who comforts his people (Isa 51:12). The language surrounding this utterance appears to indicate that his comfort can also "breathe life, hope, strength, and encouragement into his people" (Oswalt, 1998, p. 345). Later in Isaiah, God compares the quality of his comfort to that of a mother who comforts her son (Isa 66:13), a comparison meant to illustrate the depth of his care and concern for his people. The closeness alluded to in these displays of safe haven behavior is meant to express "the intimate, personal involvement of a loving, personal God with his people" (Oswalt, 1986, p. 678).

God as Deliverer, Defender, Rescuer

In multiple verses, God declares that he is with his people to deliver them and save them from their enemies. In Judg 10:12, God reminds his people that he delivered them from their enemies, even when they had been engaged in gross idolatry. In Zech 12:8, God gives "extravagant reassurance of protection" (Goldingay & Scalise, 2009, p. 297), highlighting a quality of safe haven caregiving only God can provide.

In Ps 91:14-16, God declares that he possesses several characteristics that may be reasonably expected of attachment caregivers. God states without reservation that he will be with and deliver those who love him and commits to demonstrating his salvation for them (deClaisse-Walford et al., 2014, p. 701). The same commitments were made to Jeremiah when he was confronted with instructions that made him fearful. God instructed him that he would be with Jeremiah to rescue him from the troubles he would suffer (Jer 1:8). Additionally, God promises to answer when people call upon him, to be with them in times of trouble, and to rescue and honor them. In Isa 46:4, God declares himself

unchanging and commits to the safe haven behavior of carrying his people through whatever challenges they endure (Oswalt, 1998, p. 230). God's promise to deliver was also extended to those not of Israel but who trusted in him (Jer 39:18).

God Returns His People to Safety

God did not leave his ancient people without assistance, even after they went into exile. He declared through Jeremiah (Jer 12:15; 27:22; 24:6, 7) that He was committed to a "sovereign and generous involvement with them in restoring them to their domain" (Goldingay, 2021, p. 344). Not only that, but he also promised that they would dwell in safety (Jer 32:37). Contemporary individuals may take comfort in this demonstration of God's safe haven behavior. The needs of God's people will be neither forgotten nor neglected.

Summary

Biblical canon presents multiple evidences of divine utterance in which God articulates safe haven behaviors that consistently portray him as "overwhelmingly compassionate and caring, patient and forgiving, reliable in his commitment to his people" (Bauckham, 2020, p. 69). God does not necessarily wait for his people to seek safe haven in him; he anticipates their needs and declares that he is available to them even before they ask. God notices the devastation and groaning of the afflicted and needy and provides them the desired safety. God declares himself to be a deliverer, defender, and rescuer in the present and future troubles. He also self-identifies as a helper and comforter, comparing the quality of his comfort to that of a mother.

Each instance of divine utterance presented indicates that the safe haven function of God's attachment caregiving is inherent to the divine nature. Knowing that God's

character does not change, people have every reason to draw strength from these findings.

Unanticipated Additional Findings

It became evident early in the inductive reading of the Old Testament that there is more to divine attachment behavior than this limited exploration of divine utterance initially set out to capture. Most notably, certain instances of divine utterance revealed that, in addition to self-revealing in ways that may be interpreted as engaging in attachment caregiving behaviors, God also self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as engaging in attachment *seeking* behaviors. Therefore, the additional categories of proximity seeking and separation distress were added to the data collection process. The collected data were coded according to the two attachment seeking behaviors, then coded again when patterns emerged that indicated multiple unique demonstrations of the attachment seeking behaviors.

Reporting these additional findings does not challenge the integrity of this project's theological and methodological commitments nor violate any presuppositions. The case is made that this finding should not be a surprise. As was noted in Chapter 2, attachment has been recognized in the literature as a being a reciprocal relationship. Also noted in Chapter 2, divine love has been acknowledged as a reciprocal though asymmetric relationship between God and humans.

Additional Attachment Behaviors

This section presents canonical data from the Old Testament that God self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as demonstrating proximity seeking and separation distress behaviors and identifies several contexts in which these behaviors are exercised.

There is currently precious little theological support for interpreting these texts this way; however, the canonical data points to God as an attachment seeker, and this perspective must be raised to the consciousness of disciplers, pastors, and biblical scholars. The collected data were coded according to attachment seeking behaviors initially, then coded again when patterns emerged indicating multiple expressions of God's attachment seeking behaviors.

Proximity Seeking

Proximity seeking was minimally defined as any behavior intended to engage the attachment figure and achieve closeness. Twenty-four instances of divine utterance were coded according to the minimal definition of proximity seeking, then coded again into three categories depending on how the desire for proximity is manifested.

God with us

The largest sub-category of divine utterance indicating God's interest in proximity to humans consists of declarations that God is or will be with his people. In Gen 28:15, God is heard assuring a fleeing Jacob that God is with him and comforting Jacob with the promise that he will be with him wherever he goes (Walton, 2001, p. 574). God's "continuing presence" with Jacob (Bauckham, 2020, p. 23) may be interpreted as a demonstration of God's desire to maintain proximity. God assures a doubting Moses in Exod 3:12 that God will be with him, even promising Moses a sign that God is the one who sent him to deliver Egypt. Joshua received God's assurance that God is with him, recorded in Deut 31:23 and reaffirmed in Josh 1:9. Other biblical personalities also

received this promise.[1] God declared to Israel in Isa 41:10 that he was with them. His

presence was to bring them peace; "They can take courage because he, their God, is with

them" (Oswalt, 1998, p. 91). Canonical data show that God seeks proximity and

maintains it with his abiding presence.

God calls his people to return to him

Seven instances were coded of God calling out to people, seeking their company

or pleading with them to return to him. The first recorded instance of divine utterance

seeking humans can be found in Gen 3:9, in which God calls out to Adam and Eve,

asking, "Where are you?" This text has been read as evidence of the quality of the pre-

lapsarian relationship between God and humans, which has been characterized as a

"beautiful fellowship" engaged in "as they walked together every evening in the garden"

(Walton, 2001, p. 223). Though the relationship was marred by sin, and despite Adam

and Eve's avoidance of God when they heard him walking in the garden, God may be

heard in this text seeking the proximity that was their relational custom.

Even though God's people had descended into idolatry, God is recorded in 2 Kgs

17:13 calling them to turn from their evil ways rather than being stiff-necked and

resistant; likewise, in Jer 31:21, 22. In Isa 55:3, God calls his people to him, urging them

to listen so they might live. He offers them temporary and eternal proximity with all the

blessings of the eternal covenant (Oswalt, 1998, p. 437).

Though God sometimes holds the sins of his people in front of them while calling

them, there are other times he tempers his message with revelations of his love for them.

---

[1] To name a few, Isaac (Gen 26:3); Gideon (Judg 6:12); Saul (1 Sam 10:7); David (2 Sam 7:3); Solomon (1 Chron 28:20); Jeremiah (Jer 1:8); Jesus (John 16:32).

Similarly, in Isa 44:22, God calls Israel to return to him, offering proximity to him despite their transgressions and sins. God assures them that he has redeemed them and wiped out their sins, removing "the barrier to divine-human fellowship" (Oswalt, 1998, p. 188). In Jer 3:12 and 14, God invites his faithless people to acknowledge their sins and return to him because he is gracious. He promises that he will not be angry forever. Joel 2:12 and 13 likewise record God calling his people to return to him. God tells them of his grace, compassion, and lovingkindness amid their chastisement, hoping they would reconsider their behavior and return to him though he was often disappointed (Allen, 1976, p. 78).

God looks for his people

In Exod 19:4, at the beginning of what has been recognized as a statement of self-disclosure (Walton, 2001, p. 386), God reminds Israel that he bore them out of Egypt on eagles' wings, bringing them directly to himself, offering them a "perpetual relationship" (Levenson, 2016, p. 57). In Ezek 34:11 and 12, after finding his scattered people, God announces to them, "Here I am!" and details the activities he will engage in to rescue them.

Separation Distress

Separation distress was minimally defined as anxiety or emotional distress experienced because of perceived, anticipated, or real separation from an attachment figure.

God expresses separation anxiety

In one biblical text, Hos 11:8, God explicitly expresses distress at the thought of being separated from his people. "How can I give you up?" God laments, "How can I surrender you?" Later in the same verse, he speaks directly of his emotional distress, admitting that his compassions are kindled. Peckham (2015), commenting on God's reaction to being rejected by his people, identifies the emotion as angst. This definition fits well within the definition of separation anxiety. Despite his people being bent on turning from him (v. 7), God promises that he will not come to them in wrath (v. 9), pointing to his faithfulness (v. 12), desiring "to forgive and move on to better things" (Peckham, 2015, p. 160).

God experiences emotional distress

God gives utterance to his emotional distress in response to his people's separation from him. In Ezek 6:9, God admits that their infidelity crushes him; he "grieves over their condition" (Block, 1997, p. 231). In Jer 31:20, God admits that his heart yearns for his people and, "even while speaking his disciplinary words, he was still being mindful" of them (Goldingay, 2021, p. 643). These demonstrations of God's distress have been recognized in other literature as emotionally evocative (Bauckham, 2020, p. 97), even if not linked to divine attachment.

God pleads with his people

God declares in Eze 20:35 that he will bring his people out and plead with them. After stating emphatically in Eze 33:11 that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, God utters his plea: "Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why, then, will you die?" Persuasion and urging have been linked with God's behavior toward humans not

98

just for the sake of a relationship with him but also for the explicit purpose of being the blessing to all the nations that was promised to Abram (Thompson, 2010, p. 142).

God is emotionally drawn
out to other nations

Not only is God emotionally distressed by separation from his covenant people, but he is also emotionally drawn out to other nations. In Isa 15:5, he declares that his heart cries out for Moab. God again refers to his emotions being stirred up for Moab in Isa 16:11. These confessions indicate that this behavior is "normative" for God's interactions with other nations, not just his covenant people (Bauckham, 2020, p. 79). God longs for the day when "because of his attachment to mercy, faithfulness, justice, and righteousness, oppression will not be able to coexist with him" (Oswalt, 1986, p. 343).

Summary

There is canonical evidence that God self-reveals as an attachment seeker. God seeks proximity to his people, promises to maintain that proximity, and looks for his people when a breach prevents proximity. God's separation distress is manifest by angst and grief, causing God to plead with his people to return to him. God's distress is not limited to his covenant people; he also longs for proximity to the people of all other nations.

This surprising finding provides a more robust understanding of divine attachment by showing that God is interested in and committed to pursuing a fully developed, reciprocal affectional bond with humans. The understanding of God's emotional nature

that undergirds this research absolutely supports God's emotional investment in human

lives without any intimation of this behavior being neurotic or inappropriate.

<div align="center">Attachment in the Life of Jesus</div>

The recognition of God as an attachment seeker early in the inductive reading

process exerted a significant influence on how to interpret attachment in the life of Jesus.

As a result, divine utterance in the New Testament is considerably more complex than

that of the Old Testament as it provides evidence for both attachment caregiving and

seeking behaviors between Jesus and the Father and between Jesus and humans.

Instances of the divine utterance of Jesus *seeking* attachment were collected and

categorized according to the attachment seeking behaviors. Data were further organized

within each category according to whether Jesus' utterance indicated he was seeking

attachment to God the Father or his human companions.

Jesus as Secure Base

To be aligned with Jesus "is not simply a relationship of formal obedience"

(France, 2007, p. 1119) but a personal relationship. The relationship Jesus built with his

disciples was the context in which he functioned as a secure base for them. Jesus called

them to not only follow him (Matt 8:22, 9:9; Mark 1:17, 2:14), but he also sent them out

(John 20:21). In calling disciples to himself as well as sending them out, Jesus was

demonstrating that he was a secure base not just for the disciples' personal benefit but

also for the benefit of the rest of the world that needs to know of the salvation of God.

Matthew 10:16 records Jesus sending his disciples out to preach the Gospel. He

does not merely command, however. He also takes the time to prepare them for the

challenges of their mission and admonishes them to be wise and innocent, not too trusting

<div align="center">100</div>

of men but implicitly trusting of the Father. This secure base behavior encompasses more than just sending out. By also preparing them, he is ensuring the success of the mission he sends them out on.

In the account of Jesus' ascension recorded in Matt 28:19, 20, Jesus again sends his disciples out "to gather God's chosen people from all over the earth" (France, 2007, p. 1114). This was followed by the promise that the divine presence would still be with them, empowering them to complete the task until Jesus should return (Duvall & Hays, 2019, p. 199; Lister, 2015, p. 313; Peckham, 2016, p. 83).

In Mark 5:19, Jesus is recorded commanding a man he had cast a demon out of to go home to his people and witness to them about the great things that had been done for him. Luke 8:39: Jesus had a purpose for the healed demoniac. Instead of following Jesus as part of his itinerant ministry, Jesus sent him home to "tell his relations and acquaintances what a mighty work of redemption God had accomplished in his life" (Geldenhuys, 1951).

There is canonical evidence that the Father and Jesus work together as secure bases for the Holy Spirit. John 14:16 captures Jesus' promise to ask the Father to send the Spirit to the disciples to "be with them forever." In 14:26, Jesus indicates with certainty that his request would be granted: the Spirit would be sent to them in Jesus' name. The Spirit would not only be with them forever, but he would also teach the disciples, bringing back to their minds all that Jesus had taught them. In 15:26 and 16:7, Jesus declares that he will send the Spirit from the Father to his followers, and that the Spirit's ministry would additionally include testifying about Jesus. At his ascension Jesus instructed the disciples to stay in Jerusalem, promising that they would receive the gift of

the Holy Spirit soon (Acts 1:5). The sending of the Spirit by the Father and Jesus (Acts 2) ensured that the divine presence will remain with God's people until the Second Coming.

Safe Haven in the Experience of Jesus

Providing safe haven

That Jesus entered human history "to bring his people to himself" (Lister, 2015, p. 185), to save them from sin and separation from God is a central tenet of Christianity. In the context of the plan of salvation, bringing people to himself is perhaps the most important manifestation of safe haven behavior. Daily life has its challenges, and Jesus also provides safe haven from those. In Matt 11:28, Jesus issues "a direct invitation to find the solution to life's problems by coming to him" (France, 2007, p. 447). Jesus promises those who respond to his call may rest in his presence and benefit from their deep personal relationship with him (Peckham, 2021, p. 109).

Matt 14:29 contains Jesus' response to Peter's request to walk on water and Peter's subsequent sinking. France (2007) states, "To be faithless is to lack the practical confidence in God and/or Jesus which is required in those who seek his supernatural provision" (p. 571). Jesus, exercising safe haven behavior, saved Peter despite his lack of practical confidence.

In Matt 19:13-14, Jesus rebukes his disciples for attempting to prevent children from reaching Jesus. This rebuke is deserved because the disciples were "out of sympathy with Jesus' value scale" (France, 2007, p. 727). Jesus declared that to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must become as children, who in this story were joyously seeking his presence. Recognizing his role as a safe haven for others, Jesus commanded that children

be permitted to come to him. After declaring that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such, he blessed the children.

Jesus' compassion for others prompted safe haven behavior. He invited the weary and heavy-laden to come to him for rest (Matt 11:28). When the disciples had been so busy they had not even been able to eat, Jesus invited them to "come apart and rest a while" (Mark 6:31).

Seeking safe haven

In the Father. There is canonical evidence of Jesus seeking safe haven in the Father. Facing imminent betrayal and crucifixion Jesus retreated to Gethsemane for prayer (Matt 26:39, 42, 44). In great distress, he agonized with the Father that he might be relieved of the mission but only if such a course were the Father's will.

In human companions. There is also evidence that Jesus sought safe haven from his human companions. Also in Gethsemane, while struggling with his mission to secure the world's salvation, Jesus exhibited "a strong need for human companionship" that caused him to seek safe haven through his companions' presence and prayers on his behalf (Matt 26:38, 40, 45). Their failure to provide safe haven left Jesus "unsupported in his distress" (France, 2007, pp. 1003, 1004). Jesus' need was not met, but he did seek it.

Proximity Maintenance

France (2007) suggests that Jesus' promises to be with his disciples, recorded in Matt 18:20 and 28:20, echo the Old Testament evidence that God desires to dwell among his people. This proximity is not restricted; Jesus does not promise his presence only to the learned or the leaders but "to any two or three of his people who meet as his

disciples" (France, 2007, p. 698). Jesus seeks proximity to and promises to be with small groups of believers just as much as he does large groups.

Jesus' proximity seeking can be understood as one way he accomplishes the plan of salvation. As recorded in Luke 19:5, Jesus called Zacchaeus down from the tree and invited himself to Zacchaeus' house. This proximity seeking behavior on the part of Jesus was intended to bring about "an effective and practical revolution in [Zacchaeus'] life" (Geldenhuys, 1951, p. 471), which it did.

God wants to be with us and is with us

In John 17:24, Jesus prays to the Father, expressing "more than a petition, a forthright declaration to the Father of what 'I want'" (Michaels, 2010, p. 879): his desire that his followers ultimately be with him. However, until the Father can grant that request, Jesus informs his people that he is with them always, even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20). It is the divine presence that will be with them to fulfill the Great Commission, a presence which has no temporal or spatial limitations since the Resurrection (France, 2007, p. 1119). Since the Resurrection, this presence is none other than the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised "to send to you from the Father" (John 15:26).

God promises to return

John 14:3 records Jesus promising future temporal and spatial proximity to his people. Jesus declares that he will come again to receive his people so they may be where he is. Noted as "the only instance in the entire New Testament in which Jesus speaks of 'coming back' or 'coming again,'" this verse serves as the "only explicit evidence in the Gospels of a 'second' coming of Jesus" (Michaels, 2010, p. 771). In verse 23, Jesus

repeats that promise, adding that even the Father will come to them and make his dwelling—maintain proximity—to his people (Michaels, 2010, p. 789).

Separation Distress

From the Father

Jesus exhibited the ultimate demonstration of separation distress after the Passover meal. In Gethsemane, Jesus was aware of his impending separation from the Father. Though it is "something he does not want to have to go through" (France, 2007, p. 1005), Jesus manages his distress by praying. Later, on the cross, feeling that he had been "cursed and forsaken" by the Father (Holtzen, 2019, p. 195) he cried out in deep psychological distress, "My Father, My Father, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt 27:46, Mark 15:34). France (2007), linking the cry of dereliction to Ps 22, suggests that this cry, though it expresses the utter devastation of a man who continues to appeal to God and trust him despite his present circumstances, "is in effect a shout of defiant trust in the God who he fully expects to rescue him" (p. 1076).

From human companions

In Matt 23:37, Jesus is recorded lamenting deeply how he wanted to save his people (Peckham, 2015, p. 156), but could not due to their unwillingness. This instance of divine utterance hints at the possibility that separation distress may have played a role in the Trinity's formulation and initiation of the plan of salvation.

Summary

While fewer in number than the evidences collected for the primary research, divine utterances in the New Testament show Jesus's attachment behaviors to be a blend

of attachment seeking and caregiving, exercised toward both God the Father and human companions. Jesus experienced secure attachment with the Father and the Spirit and, at the same time, functioned as an absolutely adequate attachment caregiver toward all the people he encountered. The canonical data collected about Jesus' attachment behaviors provides a unique perspective on divine attachment with significant implications for how humans may pursue it.

Discussion

There is abundant canonical evidence that God self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as providing secure base and safe haven attachment caregiving, and that key to these functions is the divine presence. Sometimes, it is difficult to discern where secure base behaviors end, and safe haven behaviors begin due to the nature of the divine presence. Whether the divine presence mediated by the Spirit is one from which believers may go out from (secure base) or return to (safe haven), this presence is promised to God's people. Concerning the instances of divine utterance referenced above, not one may be understood as though God were emphatically declaring, "I AM a secure base" or "I AM a safe haven." That does not mean, however, that God does not possess the characteristics that may rightfully be expected of a secure base or a safe haven. Neither does it mean that God does not engage in attachment behaviors. God's commitment to behaviors meeting the criteria of attachment caregiving is implied in the very words he utters and the presence he promises.

The additional contexts surrounding the instances of divine utterance provide rich insights into the quality of God's caregiving, sometimes by describing how he provides such care and at other times by employing metaphors familiar to human experience.

Other contextual evidence suggests that God's attachment caregiving has a covenantal quality to it; it appears to be of the same nature as the model of divine love that undergirded this project.

This canonical evidence contributes to a greater understanding of divine attachment by providing a model of divine attachment based on divine utterance rather than personal subjective measures. Additionally, these canonical findings provide a strong theological corollary for research conducted by Granqvist et al. (2012) that found, across four separate studies, that the idea of God as an adequate attachment figure is sustainable, even if variable due to individual differences (attachment insecurities).

"Our brains . . . *construct our experience* of God—sometimes in ways that contradict what we assent to theologically" (Thompson, 2010, p. 118). When humans choose to pay attention to their attachment to God, they are prepared to reconstruct their experiences of God and to deal with the contradictions between their God concepts and God images. No one should not expect the immediate healing of attachment injuries just because "we simply recite the verses that assure us" of an earned secure attachment style with God (Thompson, 2010, p. 133). Instead, we should approach the task as a process. Internal working models and attachment styles are built from the earliest moments and do not change in an instant; overcoming them must be intentional and, in the case of divine attachment, theologically accurate. A canonical model of divine attachment based on divine utterance can provide such accuracy, based on accepting God's self-revelation as more truthful about his attachment caregiving than personal subjective conceptualizations. The most profound change may occur when we see God for who he really is (Hall & Hall, 2021, p. 253).

Summary

There appears to be a significant overlap of attachment concepts embedded in the instances of divine utterance that were examined for this project. God self-reveals as a secure base and demonstrates at the very same time that he is a safe haven, always present for his people to turn to when they are distressed. Separation anxiety and proximity maintenance are also related; God seeks proximity and expresses distress when his people remain distant from him.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Background

Christianity is experiencing a decline in many places and, with it, discipleship engagement. One side effect of this state of affairs is the loss of the relational context for the transformation and growth that characterizes discipleship. As a result, discipleship literature has proliferated over the past few decades as thought leaders have identified problems and attempted to offer solutions. Some issues identified include biblical illiteracy, spiritual immaturity, expectations of instant change instead of long-term commitment, and the belief that increasing biblical knowledge will lead to spiritual growth. Some solutions have focused on the authority of Scripture, apologetics, spiritual transformation, life management, and the importance of relationships.

Concerns about the diminishing effectiveness of Christian discipleship practices and engagement are legitimate and chronic. It seemed appropriate to reconsider the challenges with a particular focus on the relational context necessary for successful discipleship and religious education endeavors. Attachment theory provides a relational context that has been recognized for its promising applicability to religion and religious expression. The following section traces my research journey through attachment theory, religion as attachment, and the psychological understanding of divine attachment to a canonical model of divine attachment that nudges the conversation toward a theological one.

Attachment

Definition

Humans, as fundamentally relational creatures, need healthy relationships to thrive. Attachment, an innate, intergenerational, fascinatingly enduring system of caregiving and care-seeking behaviors, significantly influences the quality of all types of relationships. First postulated as a framework for understanding the behavior of young children with their mothers, it has since been applied cross-culturally, across the lifespan, and in a wide variety of relationships ranging from families of origin to street gangs to God.

Attachment Behaviors

Attachment caregiving behaviors are defined as those that provide a secure base from which an individual may go out and explore her or his environment and a safe haven to retreat to in times of stress. Attachment-seeking behaviors are those an individual engages in to stay close to the caregiver, whether by maintaining proximity or demonstrating separation distress. Attachment seekers recognize (even if subconsciously) patterns in their interactions with caregivers and organize them into a system of mental representations of themselves, and others, referred to as internal working models (IWMs). These IWMs form the basis of expectations regarding how future relationships will work. Healthy IWMs promote satisfaction in other relationships and make forming future relationships easier. Unhealthy IWMs lead to frustration in other relationships and difficulty forming new ones.

Attachment Styles

Attachment styles have been defined as secure or insecure, depending on the attachment figure's degree of attentive, sensitive, and responsive caregiving. Recent research has suggested refining the definition to acknowledge that there is no truly secure attachment, only degrees of security determined by scores on the anxious and avoidant dimensions of attachment measurement. This development in the psychology of religion is significant for the proposed model of divine attachment in that it provides a context for understanding the theological concept that humans are sinners and, therefore, incapable of demonstrating any perfect behavior, let alone secure attachment behaviors. According to this new way of thinking about attachment security, the more secure attachments are those with low anxiety about relationships and low avoidance of others. Scores on the same dimensions also characterize the three insecure attachments. Anxious attachments are identified by high anxiety and low avoidance scores, insecure-avoidant attachments are marked by low anxiety and high avoidance, and disorganized attachments are distinguished by high scores on both anxiety and avoidance dimensions.

The most recent addition to the family of attachment styles is that of earned or evolved attachment, in which an individual with a previous high insecure anxious or avoidant attachment score has received positive interventions and emotional support, leading to stabilized IWMs and lower scores on the anxiety and avoidance dimensions of attachment measurement. This attachment style provides strong evidence that attachment foundations and the processes that shape them, while powerful, should not be seen as prescriptive or deterministic. It also shows that IWMs may be transformed and attachment improved with the right care.

Romantic Love, Religion, and Attachment

Similar psychological processes are involved in religious conversion and falling in love. When romantic love was conceptualized as an attachment process, a similar application was made to religion. Studying religious beliefs, behaviors, and experiences within a framework of religion as an attachment process makes it possible not just to conceive of God as an attachment figure but also to promote attachment to God as a natural and desirable outcome.

Religion as an attachment process has been characterized by the believer's perception of having a relationship with God and the extent to which the believer seeks proximity to him and experiences anxiety when feeling separated from him. This characterization has been determined to meet the formal criteria for an attachment relationship. Though God is generally perceived to be a safe haven and a secure base, the degree to which that is so depends upon individual differences heavily influenced by pre-existing IWMs. The idea that God is a sufficient attachment figure is significantly determined by perception, which is heavily (though not necessarily incorrectly) influenced by subjectivity, and doctrinal and philosophical presuppositions. This raises theological concerns for which the literature has no current resolution.

Divine Attachment

The concept of God as an attachment figure has gained traction in the psychology of religion over the last three decades but has yet to do so in theology. Suppose divine attachment is to be championed as a possible solution to the challenges facing discipleship and religious education. In that case, any new model must consider the role of internal working models (IWMs) undergirding existing divine attachment styles,

provide evidence that God possesses the characteristics and traits that are reasonably expected of an adequate attachment figure, and demonstrate that God engages in behaviors that may be interpreted as providing attachment caregiving.

Existing models of divine attachment are approached from the psychology of religion perspective and are predicated on IWMs of human attachment relationships. The key to understanding divine attachment is understanding divine IWMs and the God representations embedded in them. Consisting of God images and God concepts, God representations are critical components of divine attachment due to their cognitive and affective influences on how an individual perceives interactions with God as an attachment figure. God images are the primarily implicit affective or experiential understandings of God—nonverbal, relational, and emotional conceptualizations. God concepts are the explicit cognitive or theological beliefs about his nature and being that can be verbally expressed.

Divine attachment styles are categorized similarly to adult attachment, but God is the attachment figure under consideration. Differences in divine attachment styles are attributable to differences in IWMs of God. Recognizing that the challenges facing discipleship and religious education are related to insecure divine attachment, if spiritual maturity is to be developed, it must be accomplished by establishing new IWMs with more accurate information (God concepts) and more positive experiences (God images). This necessitates a study of God and his attachment characteristics.

Recognizing that God is love and that attachment is a love relationship, the nature of God's love must be considered when seeking a coherent model of divine attachment. First, according to the canonical model of divine love, God's love is volitional in that he

113

chooses to love the world freely (not out of necessity) but not in a way that binds him to any specific course of action or behavior outside of that which he promises. Second, God's love is evaluative, meaning freely bestowed, allowing God to be affected by human joys and delights, trials, and tribulations, but not in a way that renders him helpless or subject to being overcome. Third, God's love is also emotional to the degree that it allows God to be affected, but not overwhelmed, by human needs while maintaining rationality and stability to provide for those needs. Finally, God's love is unconditional, unmerited, and available to all before they know they need it. These characteristics of divine love provide the necessary theological foundation for this study.

The Research Process

This study examined instances of direct divine utterance in the biblical canon for evidence that God self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as providing attachment caregiving. The thought process behind this approach was driven by the idea that the biblical canon should be the most significant and authoritative source of information about God as an attachment figure and that it must be consulted if divine attachment is to move conceptually beyond the subjectivity of psychological models. To accomplish this task, two questions were posed. First, *Is there any evidence in the biblical canon of God self-revealing that He possesses any of the qualities expected of an attachment figure that may be interpreted as demonstrating attachment caregiving behaviors*? And second, contingent upon the first, *What does such self-revelation reveal about the nature of his attachment behavior*? I conducted an inductive reading of the biblical canon and identified ample evidence of direct divine utterance indicating divine secure base or safe haven attachment behaviors, along with contexts and purposes for which he demonstrated

114

them. In a surprising twist, early in the inductive reading, I found that God also self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as demonstrating attachment-seeking behaviors.

The Canonical Model of Divine Attachment

God Is an Ever-present Secure Base

The qualities that define God's secure base provision, as understood through the study of direct divine utterance, go beyond the subjective perceptions and expectations currently employed in the psychological divine attachment literature. Because God is not visible to humans and therefore unobservable, demonstrations of his secure base behavior were sought in direct divine utterances in which he sent people out of his own accord or in response to petitions from his people. The biblical canon demonstrated that God manifests secure base attachment caregiving behaviors. God explicitly sends people out as ministers of salvation, as prophets, and to preserve life, among other purposes, indicating that God's secure base function is part of God's nature. When God's people resist going out on his behalf, human resistance does not diminish God's secure base behaviors. Finally, the canonical data show that God sends his presence with his people when they go out, meaning that though God is a secure base, his people never truly depart from his presence.

God Is a Persistent Safe Haven

Biblical canon presents evidence of divine utterance in which God articulates safe haven behaviors that consistently portray him as compassionate, patient, forgiving, and reliable toward his people. Though safe haven behavior is usually a response to human needs, God does necessarily wait for his people to seek safe haven in him. God hears the prayers of his people when they are in need, whether for food, shelter, safety, or rest.

Other times, God anticipates the needs of his people, declaring to them that he is available and providing for them even before they ask. God takes notice of the devastation and groaning of the afflicted and needy and provides them with the safety they need. God's safe haven roles may be summarized as deliverer, defender, and rescuer in present and future troubles, helper, and comforter. One instance of divine utterance captures God comparing the quality of his comfort to that of a mother lovingly comforting her child.

God is More Than an Attachment Caregiver

The study of God as an attachment figure has centered on God's roles as a secure base and a safe haven. This research has discovered that God also self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as demonstrating proximity-seeking and separation distress behaviors and identifies several contexts in which these behaviors are exercised. The canonical model of divine love supporting this project provides theological support for interpreting these texts this way.

In several emotionally charged utterances, God seeks proximity to his people, promises to maintain that proximity, and seeks reconciliation with his people when a breach prevents or disrupts proximity. God's separation distress is manifest by angst and grief, causing God to lament at the thought of losing his people and to plead with them to return to him. God's distress is not limited to his covenant people; the canonical data show that God also longs for proximity to the people of all other nations. This additional canonical finding provides a more robust understanding of God as an attachment figure by showing from the biblical canon that God's attachment behavior is not unilateral.

116

Instead, God is interested in and committed to pursuing a fully developed, reciprocal affectional bond with all humans.

<center>Perfect Attachment in the Life of Jesus</center>

In harmony with the divine attachment findings noted above, direct divine utterance in the New Testament shows Jesus's attachment behaviors to be a blend of attachment caregiving and seeking, exercised toward both God the Father and human companions. As a secure base for humans, Jesus sent people out to preach, teach, baptize, and testify to others of the great things he had done. Working with God the Father as a secure base pair, God the Father and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples to be God's presence with them, to teach them, to remind them of all they had learned from Jesus, and to testify of Jesus and his ministry for the restoration of the relationship between God and humans that was forfeited at the Fall.

Jesus' safe haven behaviors are most notably observable in calling others to himself. Jesus called the weary to himself, promising to give them rest from the things that caused them to be weary and heavy-laden. When the disciples needed rest and relief from the crowds, Jesus called them to himself and took them to a retired place. Demonstrating that his secure base behaviors are not for adults only, after witnessing his disciples turning children turned away from him, Jesus called children to himself and blessed them. Jesus himself sought safe haven in the Father, most notably in Gethsemane, with his imminent betrayal and crucifixion looming. Jesus also simultaneously sought safe haven in the presence and prayers of his human companions.

The proximity-seeking behaviors evident in Jesus' utterances include acknowledgments of his mission to redeem fallen humanity and expressions of desire to

<center>117</center>

be close to the Father and his human companions. Also included are promises that Jesus' presence would no longer be restricted in time and space because of the gift of the Spirit and promises to return so that humans may ultimately be restored to physical closeness to God.

Jesus demonstrated separation distress in relation to humans and to the Father. During his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus wept and expressed sadness at being rejected by the people when all he wanted to do was gather them to himself to save them from the destruction wrought by sin. Jesus' most powerful expression of separation distress was captured in the cry of dereliction directed at the Father as he was dying on the cross. Jesus was most certainly capable of experiencing separation distress without any loss or diminishment of his divinity. Based on the canonical data I have collected, I suggest that it was God's separation anxiety, demonstrated in the Old Testament as well as the New, that undergirded the formulation of the plan of salvation, allowing God to reconcile humans to himself through Jesus and give the same ministry of reconciliation to humans.

In this canonical model of divine attachment, it is often pleasantly difficult to discern where certain behaviors end, and others begin due to the nature of the divine presence frequently observed in attachment interactions. God's attachment behaviors are demonstrated in a way strongly linked with the canonical model of divine love. Like God's love, God's attachment behaviors are volitional, meaning God freely chooses to be in an attachment relationship with humans. The evaluative nature of God's love allows God to respond to human joys and delights, trials, and tribulations. God's attachment behaviors are also emotionally moved to intervene in his people's lives. God's attachment

behaviors are unconditional, unmerited, and precede human awareness of need. Finally, God's attachment behaviors are reciprocal. God is not only an attachment caregiver; he is also an attachment seeker, though not on the level of humans due to the asymmetrical nature of the divine-human relationship.

The Promise of a Canonical Model of Divine Attachment

As a psychospiritual and psychosocial phenomenon, divine attachment is certainly benefited from the canonical model that presents divine self-revelation as the source of attachment behavior information. The God of the canonical model of divine attachment is an incredibly relational God seeking connection with humans. He demonstrates it powerfully by engaging in attachment caregiving and attachment-seeking behaviors. Though this model does not answer all questions one may have regarding the relational nature of God or even of his attachment characteristics, enough may be known about God from his self-revelation to give individuals a framework within which they may revise their God concepts, have more positive God image experiences, and achieve a more secure attachment to God.

Discipleship

The canonical model of divine attachment has significant implications for parents, teachers, clergy, pastoral care specialists, and the faith community. The ability for individuals to depend on members of their faith community has been associated with increased spiritual well-being.

Personal

The idea that there is no truly secure attachment style is not out of place in Christian theological thought. Because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, not a single human being models or experiences perfectly secure attachment. As a result, it may be said that every human being has some degree of attachment injury that destabilizes the internal working model (IWM) of God. The canonical model of God, focusing on God's own expressions of attachment behavior, may be used to correct inaccurate God representations that hinder personal spiritual development. Securing personal attachment to God would involve the study of and meditation on the attachment attributes and behaviors of God.

More secure personal attachment to God has been linked to several positive outcomes for individuals with effects that carry over into their communities. Within the Christian discipleship context, they are more engaged, have more positive views of their faith communities, are more tolerant of those with different beliefs, and are more willing to explore theologically.

Parenting

Attachment to God is very closely associated with attachment to parents, hinting that a solemn responsibility rests upon parents to foster as secure an attachment bond as possible between themselves and their children and, ultimately, between their children and God. Once internalized and practiced by parents personally, the canonical model of divine attachment may be employed as a conceptual framework for parenting to foster more secure attachments to God in their children. The intentional development of stable divine IWMs can be done by practicing attachment priming with the children, using the

canonical divine attachment data as the source. Parents who interact with their children in attachment-promoting ways tend to raise children who are secure in their identity, believe in a benevolent, loving God, and are more willing to talk about their faith.

<div align="center">Religious Education</div>

Teachers

In parochial terms, whether formal or informal, religious education is meant to provide appropriate information and a proper context in which people can grow spiritually. Most religious curricula focus on doctrinal and lifestyle matters, which have their place. However, such matters cannot lead to a relationship with God the way a study of God's attributes and attachment behaviors can. Therefore, religious education curricula would benefit from including a unit on the canonical model of divine attachment to introduce, reinforce, and further enlighten the students.

Clergy

The literature review noted that many clergy have identified probable causes and identified remedies for the decline of Christianity and the decreasing commitment to discipleship. While doctrinal matters are important and preaching them has its place, discipleship is about fostering horizontal and vertical relationships. Finding ways to increase attachment to and engagement with God would be wise, recognizing that healing God concepts and images should ideally be done through Scripture and with trustworthy, dependable, and safe members of the faith community.

Converts to faith communities would benefit if clergy would begin the process by studying the canonical model of divine attachment to ensure that God representations are accurate. It is essential to ensure that an individual's understanding of God and his

behaviors toward humans can support the distinctive doctrines of the faith community he or she desires to become part of.

Pastoral Care Specialists and Counselors

Pastoral care specialists and counselors have already recognized the beautiful utility of divine attachment as a healing framework for their clients. The benefit to them of this canonical model is that it offers a theological foundation upon which to rest their assertions that God is the ultimate attachment figure. This model capitalizes on the work psychologists of religion have done, examining it from a theological point of view and extending the concept of God as an attachment figure to include his attachment-seeking behaviors. A case could be made even for secular therapists that they need not believe in the model themselves, only recognize the value it holds for their Christian and other God-believing clients.

Church Families

The quality of familial divine attachments is reflected in church attachments. When more secure individuals socialize, they become a force for good. In the church context, practicing the canonical model of divine attachment as a discipleship approach would provide the relational context necessary for discipleship interactions which foster relationships between humans and between humans and God. With the relational context restored and security increased, there would be increased biblical literacy, faith maturity, and spiritual growth, worship attendance would improve, and more individuals would engage in discipleship practices.

The restoration of the moral image of God in humanity appears, at least in part, to run through divine attachment. Differences in divine attachment style have been linked to

differences in moral behavior. Individuals who scored high in insecure avoidant God attachment were found to have lower scores in care and fairness than secure and insecure anxious individuals, and especially lower scores in respect for authority and moral purity. Attachment priming according to the canonical model may play a role in improving morality through its strong positive relationship to compassionate and altruistic behaviors,

A church employing the canonical model of divine attachment in the discipleship context would have a special role to play in the recovery of trauma victims, of which there seems to be an ever-increasing number. Traumatized individuals are less likely to have positive images of God, so the patient, loving teaching about the God of the canonical model would assist the recovery process. It may also offer psychological and spiritual protection during that process.

The importance of divine attachment divine attachment in church relationships is perhaps more significant than it is given credit for. Attachment relationships in the church influence the security of divine attachment. Intentional sensitive attachment caregiving increases the likelihood that securely attached individuals will adopt the religious standards of the faith community; insensitive attachment caregiving and negative interactions with members of the faith community have been linked to the rejection of the community's religious standards and lowered well-being. Using the canonical model would address appropriate relational behavior in the church and foster the best practices.

Secure attachment to the God of the canonical model should cause believers to participate altruistically in acts of compassion, not just toward other church members but to humanity in general. With particular concern for God's holy separation anxiety, if the

heart of God is reproduced in his followers by close association with God in all of his attachment behaviors, there will be a proportional effort to present the God of canonical attachment in evangelistic contexts in the hope of drawing others toward God.

Limitations

I did not examine indirect divine utterances or the utterances of other biblical characters regarding God's attachment behaviors. Narratival references to divine attachment behaviors were likewise excluded.

This study did not consult English translations of the Bible other than the NASB20. However, to provide more depth to the material and fuller descriptions of God's attachment behaviors, other translations of the Bible could be consulted. Inasmuch as this study was conducted with only minimal reference to the original languages, an exegetical study of the divine utterances relating to attachment would be greatly beneficial.

Future Directions

This study has shown from a theological perspective that God self-reveals in ways that may be interpreted as engaging in attachment caregiving and attachment-seeking behaviors. Based on the data collected, I conclude that God is more than adequate as an attachment figure, that God is the ultimate attachment figure. The first three next steps I see are all related. The first is to create a curriculum for teaching the canonical model of divine attachment. As attachment is operational across the lifespan, this curriculum could be developed with distinct lifespan categories in mind. Developing pre- and post-test qualitative and quantitative instruments would be the second step. Third, the newly-

created instruments would be deployed to evaluate the delivery of the canonical model. Results could lead to modifications of the curriculum if and where necessary.

The canonical model of divine attachment could be explored as a function of the covenant with God. In addition to perhaps providing greater clarity on certain findings of this study, there may be nuances in such a relationship that have been missed in this study.

Finally, men and women perceive God differently and transmit knowledge of him to others in different ways. As the image of God in humanity is male and female, the image of God in ministry to humanity should also be male and female. Both male and female perspectives are necessary for the healthy development of divine IWMs and the intergenerational transmission of faith.

REFERENCES

Abramowitz, J. S., D. Huppert, J., Cohen, A. B., Tolin, D. F., & Cahill, S. P. (2002). Religious obsessions and compulsions in a non-clinical sample: The Penn Inventory of Scrupulosity (PIOS). *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *40*(7), 825-838.

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1964). Patterns of attachment behavior shown by the infant in interaction with his mother. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development*, *10*(1), 51–58.

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1979). Infant–mother attachment. *American Psychologist 34*(10), 932–937.

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1985). Attachments across the life span. *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, *6*(9), 792-812.

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, *44*(4), 709-716.

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1991). Attachments and other affectional bonds across the life cycle. In C. M. Parkes, J. Stevenson-Hinde, & P. Marris (Eds.), *Attachment across the life cycle*. Routledge.

Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M., Waters, E., & Wall, S. N. (1978). *Patterns of attachment*. Routledge.

Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. N. (2015). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Erlbaum.

Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Bowlby, J. (1991). An ethological approach to personality development. *American Psychologist*, *46*(4), 333.

Allen, J. P., & Tan, J. S. (2016). The multiple facets of attachment in adolescence. In J. Cassidy & P. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (3rd ed., pp. 399-415). Guilford.

Allen, L. C. (1976). *The Books of Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*. Eerdmans.

Andersen, S. M., Downey, G., & Tyler, T. R. (2005). Becoming engaged in the community: A relational perspective on social identity and community engagement. In G. Downey, J. Eccles, & C. Chatman (Eds.), *Navigating the future: Social identity, coping, and life tasks* (pp. 210-251). Russell Sage Foundation.

Andrews, A. (Ed.). (2010). *The kingdom life: A practical theology of discipleship and spiritual formation*. NavPress.

Aquinas, T. (1949). *On being and essence* (A. Maurer, Trans.; 2nd revised ed.). Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.

Baines, R. S., Barcellos, R. C., Butler, J. P., Lindblad, S. T., & Renihan, J. M. (2015). *Confessing the impassible God: The biblical, classical, and confessional doctrine of Divine Impassibility*. RBAP.

Baines, R. S., & Garrick, S. (2015). The Old Testament on the Doctrine of Divine Impassibility. In R. S. Baines, R. C. Barcellos, J. P. Butler, S. T. Lindblad, & J. M. Renihan (Eds.), *Confessing the Impassible God*. Reformed Baptist Academic Press.

Baines, R. S., & Rennie, C. (2015). Closing Comments and Affirmations and Denials. In R. S. Baines, R. C. Barcellos, J. P. Butler, S. T. Lindblad, & J. M. Renihan (Eds.), *Confessing the Impassible God*. Reformed Baptist Academic Press.

Baldwin, M. W., Keelan, J. P. R., Fehr, B., Enns, V., & Koh-Rangarajoo, E. (1996). Social-cognitive conceptualization of attachment working models: Availability and accessibility effects. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *71*(1), 94-109.

Barna Group. (2015). *The state of discipleship*. NavPress.

Bartholomew, K. (1990). Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *7*(2), 147-178.

Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *61*(2), 226-244.

Bauckham, R. (2020). *Who is God?: Key moments of biblical revelation*. Baker Academic.

Beck, L., & Madresh, E. A. (2008). Romantic partners and four-legged friends: An extension of attachment theory to relationships with pets. *Anthrozoös*, *21*(1), 43-56.

Beck, R. (2006). God as a secure base: Attachment to God and theological exploration. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *34*(2), 125-132.

Belsky, J., & Fearon, R. M. P. (2016). Precursors of attachment security. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (3rd ed., pp. 291–313). Guilford Press.

Blatt, S. J., & Auerbach, J. S. (2000). Psychoanalytic models of the mind and their contributions to personality research. *European Journal of Personality*, *14*(5), 429-447.

Block, D. I. (1997). *The Book of Ezekiel, Ch 1-24*. Eerdmans.

Boccia, M. L. (2011). Human interpersonal relationships and the love of the Trinity. *Priscilla Papers*, *25*(4), 22-26.

Bock, N. A., Lewis Hall, M. E., Wang, D. C., & Hall, T. W. (2021). Spiritual self-awareness as a moderator between attachment to God and evangelical Christians' appraisals of suffering. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*.

Bohlin, G., Hagekull, B., & Rydell, A.-M. (2000). Attachment and Social Functioning: A Longitudinal Study from Infancy to Middle Childhood [Article]. *Social Development*, *9*(1), 24-39.

Bosworth, D. A. (2015). Ancient prayers and the psychology of religion: Deities as parental figures. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *134*(4), 681-700.

Bowlby, J. (1958). The nature of the child's tie to his mother. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *39*, 350-373.

Bowlby, J. (1973). *Separation: Anger and anxiety* (Vol. 2). Pimlico. (1973)

Bowlby, J. (1979). *The making and breaking of affectional bonds*. Routledge. (1979)

Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1997a). *Attachment* (Vol. 1). Pimlico.

Bowlby, J. (1997b). *Attachment* (Vol. 1). Pimlico. (1969)

Bowlby, J. (1998). *Loss: Sadness and depression* (Vol. 3). Pimlico. (1980)

Bowlby, J., Robertson, J., & Rosenbluth, D. (1952). A Two-Year-Old Goes to Hospital. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, *7*(1), 82-94.

Bradshaw, M., Ellison, C. G., & Flannelly, K. J. (2008). Prayer, God imagery, and symptoms of psychopathology. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *47*(4), 644-659.

Bradshaw, M., Ellison, C. G., & Marcum, J., P. (2010). Attachment to God, images of God, and psychological distress in a nationwide sample of Presbyterians. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *20*(2), 130-147.

Bretherton, I. (1985). Attachment theory: Retrospect and prospect. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *50*(1-2).

Bretherton, I., & Munholland, K. A. (2008). Internal working models in attachment relationships: Elaborating a central construct in attachment theory. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of Attachment, Second Edition: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*. The Guilford Press.

Brown, D., Hawkins Rodgers, Y., & Kapadia, K. (2008). Multicultural considerations for the application of attachment theory. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, *62*(4), 353-363.

Brown, W. S., & Strawn, B. D. (2012). *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*. Cambridge University Press.

Bucci, S., Roberts, N. H., Danquah, A. N., & Berry, K. (2014). Using attachment theory to inform the design and delivery of mental health services: A systematic review of the literature. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, *88*(1), 1-20.

Burge, R. P. (2021). *The nones: Where they came from, who they are, and where they are going*. Fortress.

Bushnell, H. (1991). *Christian Nurture*. Baker Books. (1861)

Canale, F. L. (2001). Interdisciplinary method in Christian theology? In search of a working proposal. *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, *43*(3), 366-389.

Carlson, V. J., & Harwood, R. L. (2003). Attachment, culture, and the caregiving system: The cultural patterning of everyday experiences among Anglo and Puerto Rican mother–infant pairs. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, *24*(1), 53-73.

Cassibba, R., Granqvist, P., Costantini, A., & Gatto, S. (2008). Attachment and God representations among lay Catholics, priests, and religious: A matched comparison study based on the adult attachment interview. *Developmental Psychology*, *44*(6), 1753-1763.

Cassidy, J., Jones, J. D., & Shaver, P. R. (2013). Contributions of attachment theory and research: A framework for future research, translation, and policy. *Development and Psychopathology*, *25*(4 Pt 2), 1415–1434.

Cherniak, A. D., Mikulincer, M., Shaver, P., & Granqvist, P. (2021). Attachment theory and religion. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *40*, 126-130.

Cheston, S. E., Piedmont, R. L., Eanes, B., & Lavin, L. P. (2003). Changes in clients' images of God over the course of outpatient therapy. *Counseling and values*, *47*(2), 96-108.

Chou, H.-T. G., & Uata, D. (2012). The impact of parental discipline on the image of God. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, *15*(7), 677-688.

Clinton, T., & Sibcy, G. (2002). *Attachments: Why you love, feel and act the way you do*. Thomas Nelson.

Clinton, T., & Straub, J. (2010). *God attachment: Why you believe, act, and feel the way you do about God*. Howard.

Cloud, H., & Townsend, J. S. (1992). *Boundaries: When to say yes, when to say no to take control of your life*. Zondervan.

Cogburn, M., Horton, R., & McNeil, S. E. (2017). Considering a relationship between dysfunctional coaching styles in youth sports and the development of hazardous attitudes in players. *Psychology*, *7*(8), 445-452.

Collins, N. L., Guichard, A. C., Ford, M. B., & Feeney, B. C. (2004). Working models of attachment: New developments and emerging themes. In W. S. Rholes & J. A. Simpson (Eds.), *Adult attachment: theory, research, and clinical implications* (pp. 196-239). Guilford Publications.

Collins, N. L., & Read, S. J. (1994). Cognitive representations of attachment: The structure and function of working models. In *Advances in personal relationships* (Vol. 5, pp. 53-90). Jessica Kingsley.

Comiskey, J. (2020). *Living in victory: 8 spiritual truths for transformation and renewal*. CCS.

Counted, V. (2015). Understanding God images and God concepts: Towards a pastoral hermeneutics of the God attachment experience. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, *36*(1), 1-14.

Counted, V. (2016). God as an attachment figure: A case study of the God attachment language and God concepts of anxiously attached Christian youths in South Africa. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, *18*(4), 316-346.

Cummings, J. P., Kusner, K. G., Lucero, S., Padgett, E. A., Gollery, T. J., & Pargament, K. I. (2017). A comparison of Christians' concepts of Jesus Christ and God. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *27*(1), 35-50.

Davidson, R. M. (2022). Song of songs. In J. Doukhan (Ed.), *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary* (Vol. 6, pp. 1077-1377). Pacific Press.

Davis, E. B., Moriarty, G. L., & Mauch, J. C. (2013). God images and god concepts: Definitions, development, and dynamics. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, *5*(1), 51-60.

De Vito, K. (2020). Seeking a secure base: Gangs as attachment figures. *Qualitative Social Work*, *19*(4), 754-769.

deClaisse-Walford, N., Jacobson, R. A., & Tanner, B. L. (2014). *The Book of Psalms*. Eerdmans.

Dolezal, J. E. (2017). *All That is in God*. Reformation Heritage Books.

Dolezal, J. E. (2019). Strong impassibility. In R. J. Matz & A. C. Thornhill (Eds.), *Divine impassibility: Four views of God's emotions and suffering* (pp. 13-37). IVP Academic.

Doyle, C., & Cicchetti, D. (2017). From the cradle to the grave: The effect of adverse caregiving environments on attachment and relationships throughout the lifespan. *Clinical psychology*, *24*(2), 203–217.

Duvall, J. S., & Hays, J. D. (2019). *God's relational presence: The cohesive center of biblical theology*. Baker Academic.

Egeland, B., Jacobvitz, D., & Sroufe, L. A. (1988). Breaking the cycle of abuse. *Child Development 59*(4), 1080-1088.

Ellison, C. G., Bradshaw, M., Kuyel, N., & Marcum, J. P. (2012). Attachment to God, stressful life events, and changes in psychological distress. *Review of Religious Research*, *53*(4), 493-511.

Exline, J. J., & Grubbs, J. B. (2011). "If I tell others about my anger toward God, how will they respond?": Predictors, associated behaviors, and outcomes in an adult sample. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *39*(4), 304-315.

Exline, J. J., Grubbs, J. B., & Homolka, S. J. (2015). Seeing God as cruel or distant: Links with divine struggles involving anger, doubt, and fear of God's disapproval. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *25*(1), 29-41.

Exline, J. J., Yali, A. M., & Sanderson, W. C. (2000). Guilt, discord, and alienation: The role of religious strain in depression and suicidality [https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679(200012)56:12<1481::AID-1>3.0.CO;2-A]. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *56*(12), 1481-1496.

Fearon, R. P., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., Van IJzendoorn, M. H., Lapsley, A. M., & Roisman, G. I. (2010). The significance of insecure attachment and disorganization in the development of children's externalizing behavior: A meta-analytic study. *Child development*, *81*(2), 435-456.

Feeney, B. C., & Collins, N. L. (2004). Interpersonal safe haven and secure base caregiving processes in adulthood. In *Adult attachment: Theory, research, and clinical implications* (pp. 300-338). Guilford.

Feeney, J. A. (2016). Adult romantic attachment. In J. Cassidy & P. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (3rd ed., pp. 435-463). Guilford.

Feinberg, J. S. (1986). God ordains all things. In D. Basinger & R. Basinger (Eds.), *Predestination and free will* (pp. 19-43). IVP Academic.

Felton, L., & Jowett, S. (2013). Attachment and well-being: The mediating effects of psychological needs satisfaction within the coach–athlete and parent–athlete relational contexts. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *14*, 57-65.

Fonagy, P., & Bateman, A. (2008). The development of borderline personality disorder: A mentalizing model. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, *22*(1), 4-21.

Fraley, R. C., & Davis, K. E. (1997). Attachment formation and transfer in young adults' close friendships and romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships*, *4*(2), 131-144.

Fraley, R. C., Heffernan, M. E., Vicary, A. M., & Brumbaugh, C. C. (2011). The experiences in close relationships—Relationship Structures Questionnaire: A method for assessing attachment orientations across relationships. *Psychological assessment*, *23*(3), 615.

Fraley, R. C., & Roisman, G. I. (2019). The development of adult attachment styles: four lessons. *Current opinion in psychology*, *25*, 26-30.

Fraley, R. C., & Shaver, P. (2000). Adult romantic attachment: Theoretical developments, emerging controversies, and unanswered questions. *Review of General Psychology*, *4*, 132-154.

France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew*. Eerdmans.

Freeze, T. (2017). Attachment to church congregation: Contributions to well-being over and above social support. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *45*(4), 304-314.

Freeze, T. A., & DiTommaso, E. (2015). Attachment to God and church family: Predictors of spiritual and psychological well-being. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, *34*(1), 60-71.

Gardenhire, J., Schleiden, C., & Brown, C. C. (2019). Attachment as a tool in the treatment of children within foster care. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *41*(2), 191-200.

Geldenhuys, N. (1951). *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*. Eerdmans.

Ghobary Bonab, B., Miner, M., & Proctor, M. T. (2013). Attachment to God in Islamic spirituality. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, *7*(2), 77-104.

Gibson, Thais. (2020). *Attachment theory: A guide to strengthening the relationships in your life*. Rockridge Press.

Gibson, Ty. (2020). *The heavenly trio*. Pacific Press.

Goldingay, J. (2021). *The Book of Jeremiah*. Eerdmans.

Goldingay, J., & Scalise, P. J. (2009). *Minor Prophets II*. Hendrickson.

Grabill, C. M., & Kerns, K. A. (2000). Attachment style and intimacy in friendship. *Personal Relationships*, *7*(4), 363-378.

Granqvist, P. (1998). Religiousness and perceived childhood attachment: On the question of compensation or correspondence. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *37*(2), 350-367.

Granqvist, P. (2002). Attachment and religiosity in adolescence: Cross-sectional and longitudinal evaluations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *28*, 260-270.

Granqvist, P. (2020). *Attachment in religion and spirituality: A wider view*. The Guilford Press.

Granqvist, P., & Hagekull, B. (1999). Religiousness and perceived childhood attachment: Profiling socialized correspondence and emotional compensation *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *38*, 254-273.

Granqvist, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1999). Attachment and religious representations and behavior. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment theory and research*. Guilford.

Granqvist, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2013). Religion, spirituality, and attachment. In K. Pargament (Ed.), *APA handbook for the psychology of religion and spirituality: Context, theory, and research* (Vol. 1, pp. 129-155). American Psychological Association.

Granqvist, P., Mikulincer, M., Gewirtz, V., & Shaver, P. R. (2012). Experimental findings on God as an attachment figure: Normative processes and moderating effects of internal working models. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *103*(5), 11-15.

Granqvist, P., Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2010). Religion as attachment: Normative processes and individual differences. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *14*(1), 49-59.

Granqvist, P., Sroufe, L. A., Dozier, M., Hesse, E., Steele, M., van Ijzendoorn, M., Solomon, J., Schuengel, C., Fearon, P., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M., Steele, H., Cassidy, J., Carlson, E., Madigan, S., Jacobvitz, D., Foster, S., Behrens, K., Rifkin-Graboi, A., Gribneau, N., & Spangler, G. (2017). Disorganized attachment in infancy: A review of the phenomenon and its implications for clinicians and policy-makers. *Attachment & Human Development*, *19*(6), 534–558.

Greggo, S. P. (2007). Internal working model as heart: A translation to inspire Christian care groups. *Edification: The Transdisciplinary Journal of Christian Psychology*, *5*(1), 4-12.

Griffin, D. R. (2000). Process theology and the Christian good news: A response to classical free will theism. In J. B. Cobb & C. H. Pinnock (Eds.), *Searching for an Adequate God*. Eerdmans.

Grimes, C. (2014). God image research: A literature review. In G. L. Moriarty & L. Hoffman (Eds.), *God image handbook for spiritual counseling and psychotherapy: Research, theory, and practice,* (pp. 11-32). Routledge.

Grossmann, K., Grossmann, K. E., Spangler, G., Suess, G., & Unzner, L. (1985). Maternal sensitivity and newborns' orientation responses as related to quality of attachment in Northern Germany. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *50*(1/2), 233–256.

Gunton, C. E. (1985). *Enlightenment and alienation: An essay towards a Trinitarian theology*. Eerdmans.

Haight, W. L., Kagle, J. D., & Black, J. E. (2003). Understanding and supporting parent-child relationships during foster care visits: Attachment theory and research. *Social Work*, *48*(2), 195-207.

Hall, T. W., & Edwards, K. J. (2002). The spiritual assessment inventory: A theistic model and measure for assessing spiritual development [https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5906.00121]. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *41*(2), 341-357.

Hall, T. W., Fujikawa, A., Halcrow, S. R., & Hill, P. C. (2009). Attachment to God and implicit spirituality: clarifying correspondence and compensation models. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *37*(4), 227-242.

Hall, T. W., Fujikawa, A., Halcrow, S. R., Hill, P. C., & Delaney, H. (2009). Attachment to God and implicit spirituality: Clarifying correspondence and compensation models. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *37*(4), 227-244.

Hall, T. W., & Hall, M. E. L. (2021). *Relational spirituality: A psychological-theological paradigm for transformation*. IVP Academic.

Harrington, B., & Absalom, A. (2016). *Discipleship that fits: The five kinds of relationships God uses to help us grow*. Zondervan.

Hart, J. T., Limke, A., & Budd, P. R. (2010). Attachment and faith development. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *38*(2), 122-128.

Hasker, W. (2000). An adequate God. In J. B. Cobb & C. H. Pinnock (Eds.), *Searching for an adequate God*. Eerdmans.

Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*(3), 511–524.

Heller, D. P. (2019). *The power of attachment: How to create deep and lasting intimate relationships*. Sounds True.

Helm, P. (2001). The Augustinian-Calvinist view. In J. K. Beilby & P. R. Eddy (Eds.), *Divine Foreknowledge* (pp. 161-189). IVP Academic.

Helm, P. (2008). Classical Calvinist Doctrine of God. In B. Ware (Ed.), *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God*. B&H Publishing.

Hertel, B. R., & Donahue, M. J. (1995). Parental influences on God images among children: Testing Durkheim's metaphoric parallelism. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *34*, 186-199.

Hesse, C., & Trask, S. L. (2014). Trait affection and adult attachment styles: Analyzing relationships and group differences. *Communication Research Reports*, *31*(1), 53-61.

Hesse, E. (2016). The adult attachment interview: Protocol, method of analysis, and selected empirical studies: 1985-2015. In J. Cassidy & P. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 553-597). Guilford.

Hiebert, P. G. (2008). *Transforming worldviews: An anthropological understanding of how people change*. Baker Academic.

Holtzen, W. C. (2019). *The God who trusts: A relation theology of divne faith, hope, and love*. IVP Academic.

Homolka, S. J. (2013). *Divine struggles: Parents' contributions and attachment to God as a mediator* [Master's, Case Western Reserve University]. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=case1386785400

Hooper, L. M., Tomek, S., & Newman, C. R. (2012). Using attachment theory in medical settings: Implications for primary care physicians. *Journal of Mental Health*, *21*(1), 23-37.

Houser, M. E., & Welch, R. D. (2013). Hope, religious behaviors, and attachment of God: A trinitarian perspective. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *41*(4), 281-297.

Howell, N. R. (2000). Openness and process theism: Respecting the integrity of the two views. In J. B. Cobb & C. H. Pinnock (Eds.), *Searching for an adequate God*. Eerdmans.

Hubbard, R. L. (2009). *Joshua*. Zondervan.

Huber, S., & Richard, M. (2010). The inventory of emotions toward God (EtG): Psychological valences and theological issues. *Review of Religious Research*, *52*(1), 21-40.

Huffman, D. S., & Johnson, E. L. (2002). Should the God of historic Christianity be replaced? In D. S. Huffman & E. L. Johnson (Eds.), *God Under Fire* (pp. 11-41). Zondervan.

Hull, B. (2006). *The complete book of discipleship: On being and making followers of Christ*. NavPress.

Im, D. (2017). *No silver bullets*. B&H.

Inozu, M., Clark, D. A., & Karanci, A. N. (2012). Scrupulosity in Islam: A comparison of highly religious Turkish and Canadian samples. *Behavior Therapy*, *43*(1), 190-202.

James, W. (2017). *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature*. CrossReach. (1902)

Jin, M. K., Jacobvitz, D., Hazen, N., & Jung, S. H. (2012). Maternal sensitivity and infant attachment security in Korea: Cross-cultural validation of the strange situation. *Attachment & Human Development*, *14*(1), 33-44.

Jones, J. M. (2021, March 29). *U.S. church membership falls below majority for first time*. Gallup Organization. https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx

Kam, C. (2018). Integrating divine attachment theory and the enneagram to help clients of abuse heal in their images of self, others, and God. *Pastoral Psychology*, *67*(4), 341-356.

Kaufman, G. D. (1981). *The theological imagination: Constructing the concept of God*. Westminster.

Kaufman, S. B. (2021). *Transcend*. TarcherPerigree.

Keller, H. (2018). Universality claim of attachment theory: Children's socioemotional development across cultures. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *115*(45), 11414–11419.

Keller, T. (2008). *The reason for God: Belief in an age of skepticism*. Dutton.

Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1992). An attachment-theory approach to the psychology of religion. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *2*(1), 3-28.

Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1994). The role of attachment in religious belief and behavior. In D. Perlman & K. Bartholomew (Eds.), *Advances in personal relationships*. Jessica Kingsley.

Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1997). An attachment-theory approach to the psychology of religion. In B. Spilka & D. N. McIntosh (Eds.), *The Psychology of Religion* (pp. 114-132). Westview.

Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2005). *Attachment, evolution, and the psychology of religion*. Guilford.

Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2012). Attachment theory and the evolutionary psychology of religion. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *22*(3), 231-241.

Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Hood, R. (1990). Intrinsic-extrinsic religious orientation: The boon or bane of contemporary psychology of religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *29*(4), 442-462.

Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Shaver, P. R. (1990). Attachment theory and religion: Childhood attachments, religious beliefs, and conversion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *29*(3), 315-334.

Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Shaver, P. R. (1992). An attachment-theoretical approach to romantic love and religious belief. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *18*(3), 266-275.

Knabb, J. J., & Emerson, M. Y. (2013). "I will be your God and you will be My people": Attachment theory and the grand narrative of scripture. *Pastoral Psychology*, *62*, 827-841.

Knabb, J. J., & Pelletier, J. (2014). "A cord of three strands is not easily broken": An empirical investigation of attachment-based small group functioning in the Christian church. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *42*(4), 343-358.

Knight, A. M., & Sibcy, G. A., II. (2018). *Redeeming attachment: A counselor's guide to facilitating attachment to God and earned security*. Kendall Hunt.

Koester, C. (2008). *The word of life: A theology of John's gospel*. Eerdmans.

Kosarkova, A., Malinakova, K., van Dijk, J. P., & Tavel, P. (2020). Childhood trauma and experience in close relationships are associated with the god image: Does religiosity make a difference? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(23).

Köstenberger, A. (1998). *The missions of Jesus and the disciples according to the fourth gospel*. Eerdmans.

Kucharska, J. (2018). Religiosity and the concept of God moderate the relationship between the type of trauma, posttraumatic cognitions, and mental health. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, *19*(5), 535-551.

LaCugna, C. M. (1991). *God for us: The Trinity and Christian life* (1st ed.). Harper.

Lamb, D. T. (2022). *God behaving badly: Is the God of the Old Testament angry, sexist and racist?* InterVarsity Press.

Leman, J., Hunter III, W., Fergus, T., & Rowatt, W. (2018). Secure attachment to God uniquely linked to psychological health in a national, random sample of American adults. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *28*(3), 162-173.

Levenson, J. D. (2016). *The love of God: Divine gift, human gratitude, and mutual faithfulness in Judaism*. Princeton University Press.

Lister, J. R. (2015). *The presence of God: Its place in the storyline of Scripture and the story of our lives*. Crossway.

Lister, R. (2013). *God is impassible and impassioned: Toward a theology of divine emotion*. Crossway.

Louw, D. J. (2000). *Meaning in suffering: A theological reflection on the cross and the resurrection for pastoral care and counselling*. Peter Lang.

Louw, D. J. (2007). *Cura vita: Illness and the healing of life in pastoral practice and counseling*. Lux Verbi BM.

Main, M., Kaplan, K., & Cassidy, J. (1985). Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *50*(1-2), 66-104.

Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J. (1985). Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 66-104.

Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1990). Procedures for identifying infants as disorganized/disoriented during the Ainsworth strange situation. In *Attachment in the preschool years: Theory, research, and intervention* (Vol. 1, pp. 121-160).

Mallinckrodt, B. (2000). Attachment, social competencies, social support, and interpersonal process in psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy Research*, *10*(3), 239-266.

Mayfield, K. (2022). *Attached to God: A practical guide deeper spiritual experience*. Zondervan.

McCandless, J. B. (1982). Adult religious experience haunted by unholy ghosts of childhood. *Religious Education*, *77*(2), 225-239.

McDonald, A., Beck, R., Allison, S., & Norsworthy, L. (2005). Attachment to God and parents: Testing the correspondence vs. compensation hypotheses. *Journal of Psychology & Christianity*, *24*(1).

McWey, L. M. (2004). Predictors of attachment styles of children in foster care: An attachment theory model for working with families. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *30*, 439-452.

Mesman, J., Van Ijzendoorn, M. H., & Sagi-Schwartz, A. (2016). Cross-cultural patterns of attachment: Universal and contextual dimensions. In J. Cassidy & P. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 852-877). Guilford.

Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John*. Eerdmans.

Mikulincer, M. (1998). Adult attachment style and affect regulation: strategic variations in self-appraisals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *75*(2), 420-435.

Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. (2005). Attachment security, compassion, and altruism. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *14*(1), 34-38.

Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). Boosting attachment security to promote mental health, prosocial values, and inter-group tolerance. *Psychological Inquiry*, *18*(3), 139-156.

Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2012). An attachment perspective on psychopathology. *World Psychiatry*, *11*(1), 11-15.

Miner, M. (2007). Back to basics in attachment to God: Revisiting theory in light of theology. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *35*(2), 112–122.

Miner, M., Dowson, M., & Malone, K. (2014). Attachment to God, psychological need satisfaction, and psychological well-being among Christians. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *42*(4), 326-342.

Mizuta, I. (1996). Cross-cultural study of preschoolers' attachment: Security and sensitivity in Japanese and US dyads. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *19*(1), 141-160.

Monteoliva, A., García-Martínez, J. M., & Calvo-Salguero, A. (2016). Perceived benefits and costs of romantic relationships for young people: Differences by attachment style. *The Journal of Psychology*, *150*(8), 931-948.

Neville, R. C. (2013). Modeling ultimate reality: God, consciousness, and emergence. In J. Diller & A. Kasher (Eds.), *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*. Springer.

Njus, D. M., & Scharmer, A. (2020). Evidence that God attachment makes a unique contribution to psychological well-being. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *30*(3), 178-201.

Noebel, D. A. (2006). *Understanding the times* (2nd ed.). Summit.

Nygaard, M. R., Austad, A., Kleiven, T., & Mæland, E. (2020). Religious healing experiences and earned security. *Pastoral Psychology*, *69*(5), 487-507.

O'Sullivan, D. V. (1988). The clergy-laity problem. *The Furrow*, *39*(1), 33-35.

Oord, T. J. (2010). *The Nature of Love: A Theology*. Chalice Press.

Oord, T. J. (2019). Strong passibility. In R. J. Matz & A. C. Thornhill (Eds.), *Divine impassibility: Four views of God's emotions and suffering* (pp. 129-151). IVP Academic.

Oswalt, J. (1986). *The Book of Isaiah, Ch 1-39*. Eerdmans.

Oswalt, J. (1998). *The Book of Isaiah, Ch 40-66*. Eerdmans.

Paloutzian, R. F., & Park, C. L. (2013). *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality* (2nd ed.). Guilford.

Pargament, K., Zinnbauer, B., Scott, A., Butter, E., Zerowin, J., & Stanik, P. (2003). Red flags and religious coping: Identifying some religious warning signs among people in crisis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *59*, 1335-1348.

Peckham, J. (2015a). *The love of God: A canonical model*. IVP Academic.

Peckham, J. (2015b). Theopathic or anthropopathic?: A suggested approach to imagery of divine emotion in the Hebrew Bible. *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, *42*(4), 341-355.

Peckham, J. (2016). *Canonical theology: The biblical canon, sola scriptura, and theological method*. Eerdmans.

Peckham, J. (2019). *The doctrine of God: introducing the big questions* (1 edition . ed.). T&T Clark.

Peckham, J. (2021). *Divine attributes: Knowing the covenantal God of Scripture*. Baker Academic.

Peckham, J. (n. d.). *The Wrath of the God of Love* [Unpublished].

Petersen, J. (2007). *Lifestyle discipleship: Encouraging others to spiritual maturity*. NavPress.

Pew Research Center. (2011). *Global Christianity: A report on the size and distribution of the world's Christian population*. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf

Pew Research Center. (2019). *In U.S., decline of Christianity continues at rapid pace*. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/

Pielage, S., Gerlsma, C., & Schaap, C. (2000). Insecure attachment as a risk factor for psychopathology: The role of stressful events. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, *7*(4), 296-302.

Pietromonaco, P. R., & Beck, L. A. (2019). Adult attachment and physical health. *Current Opinion in Psychology* 115-120.

Pietromonaco, P. R., & Feldman Barrett, L. (2000). Internal working models concept: What do we really know about the self in relation to others? *Review of General Psychology*, *4*(2), 155-175.

Pinnock, C. H., Rice, R., Sanders, J., Hasker, W., & Basinger, D. (1994). *The openness of God: A biblical challenge to the traditional understanding of God*. IVP Academic.

Pirutinsky, S., Rosmarin, D. H., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2019). Is attachment to God a unique predictor of mental health? Test in a Jewish sample. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *29*(3), 161-171.

Porter, S. E., & Studebaker, S. M. (2018). Method in systematic theology: An introduction. In S. E. Porter & S. M. Studebaker (Eds.), *Evangelical Theological Method* (pp. 1-28). InterVarsity.

Posada, G., Gao, Y., Wu, F., Posada, R., Tascon, M., Schöelmerich, A., & Synnevaag, B. (1995). The secure base phenomenon across cultures: Children's behavior, mothers' preferences, and experts' concepts. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *60*(2-3), 27-48.

Potvin, R. (1977). Adolescent God images. *Review of Religious Research*, *19*(1), 43-53.

Putman, J. (2010). *Real-life discipleship: Building churches that make disciples*. NavPress.

Rasar, J. D., Garzon, F., Volk, F., & O'Hare, C. A. (2013). The efficacy of a manualized group treatment protocol for changing God image, attachment to God, religious coping, and love of God, others, and self. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, *41*(4), 267-280.

Read, D. L., Clark, G. I., Rock, A. J., & Coventry, W. L. (2018). Adult attachment and social anxiety: The mediating role of emotion regulation strategies. *PloS one*, *13*(12).

Reed, B. (1978). *The dynamics of religion: Process and movement in Christian churches*. Darton, Longman & Todd.

Reichenbach, B. (1986). God Limits His Power. In D. Basinger & R. Basinger (Eds.), *Predestination and Free Will*. IVP Academic.

Rice, R. (2000). Process theism and the open view of God: The crucial difference. In J. B. Cobb & C. H. Pinnock (Eds.), *Searching for an adequate God*. Eerdmans.

Ricks, M. H. (1985). The social transmission of parental behavior: Attachment across generations. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *50*(1/2), 211-227.

Rizzuto, A. (1979). *The birth of the living God: A psychoanalytic study*. University of Chicago Press.

Roels, E. (2021). *What is Christianity: Bible study edition*. Christian Leaders.

Roisman, G. I., Padrón, E., Sroufe, L., & Egeland, B. (2002). Earned-secure attachment status in retrospect and prospect. *Child development*, *73*(4), 1204-1219.

Rom, E., & Mikulincer, M. (2003). Attachment theory and group processes: The association between attachment style and group-related representations, goals, memories, and functioning. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*(6), 1220-1235.

Rowatt, W., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2002). Two dimensions of attachment to God and their relation to affect, religiosity, and personality constructs. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *41*(4), 637-651.

Sable, P. (1995). Pets, attachment, and well-being across the life cycle. *Social Work*, *40*(3), 334-341.

Saferstein, J. A., Neimeyer, G. J., & Hagans, C. L. (2005). Attachment as a predictor of friendship qualities in college youth. *Social Behavior and Personality 33*(8), 767-776.

Sagi, A. (1990). Attachment theory and research from a cross-cultural perspective. *Human Development*, *33*(1), 10-22.

Sanders, F. (2017). Classical theism makes a comeback. *Didaktikos*, *1*(1).

Sanders, J. (2008). Divine Providence and the Openness of God. In B. Ware (Ed.), *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God*. B&H Academic.

Saribay, S. A., & Andersen, S. M. (2007). Are past relationships at the heart of attachment dynamics? What love has to do with it. *Psychological Inquiry*, *18*(3), 183–191.

Saunders, R., Jacobvitz, D., Zaccagnino, M., Beverung, L. M., & Hazen, N. (2011). Pathways to earned-security: The role of alternative support figures. *Attachment & Human Development*, *13*(4), 403-420.

Scazerro, P. (2021). *Emotionally healthy discipleship: Moving from shallow Christianity to deep transformation*. Zondervan.

Schaap-Jonker, H., Eurelings-Bontekoe, E., Verhagen, P. J., & Zock, H. (2002). Image of God and personality pathology: An exploratory study among psychiatric patients. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, *5*(1), 55-71.

Schaller, M. (2007). Is secure attachment the antidote to everything that ails us? *Psychological Inquiry*, *18*(3), 191–193.

Seifer, R., & Schiller, M. (1995). The role of parenting sensitivity, infant temperament, and dyadic interaction in attachment theory and assessment. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *60*(2/3), 146-174.

Shand, J. (2000). The effects of life experiences over a 50-year period on the certainty of belief and disbelief in God. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *10*(2), 85-100.

Shaver, P., Collins, N. L., & Clark, C. L. (1996). Attachment styles and internal working models of self and relationship partners. In *Knowledge structures in close relationships: A social psychological approach*. L. Erlbaum Associates.

Sherkat, D. E. (2008). Beyond belief: Atheism, agnosticism, and theistic certainty in the United States. *Sociological Spectrum*, *28*(5), 438-459.

Simpson, J. A., Rholes, W. S., Eller, J., & Paetzold, R. L. (2020). Major principles of attachment theory. In P. A. M. van Lange, E. T. Higgins, & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 222-239). Guilford.

Sire, J. W. (2020). *The universe next door: A basic worldview catalog* (6th ed.). InterVarsity.

Smith, J. K. A. (2016). *You are what you love: The spiritual power of habit*. Brazos.

Starky, A. B. (1999). A theological application of John Bowlby's psychoanalytic theories of attachment. *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling*, *2*(1), 15-47.

Stevens, F. L. (2017). Authenticity: A mediator in the relationship between attachment style and affective functioning. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, *30*(4), 392-414.

Stirrup, A. (2011). Attached to God: Key components of relational attachment in anticipated parent-child conversations among the Israelites. *The Journal of Family Ministry*, *2*(1), 36-42.

Storebø, O. J., Rasmussen, P. D., & Simonsen, E. (2013). Association between insecure attachment and ADHD: Environmental mediating factors. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, *20*(2), 187-196.

Stott, J. R. W. (2008). *Basic Christianity* (3rd ed.). Eerdmans.

TenElshof, J. K., & Furrow, J. L. (2000). The role of secure attachment in predicting spiritual maturity of students at a conservative seminary. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *28*(2), 99-108.

Thompson, C. (2010). *Anatomy of the soul: Surprising connections between neuroscience and spiritual practices that can transform your life and relationships*. SaltRiver.

Thompson, C. (2021). *The soul of desire: Discovering the neuroscience of longing, beauty, and community*. InterVarsity.

Thompson, K. (2010). With Jesus in the family: How early childhood attachment styles influence later relationships, both with God and in the workplace. *TEACH Journal of Christian Education*, *4*(1), 28-32.

Tsumura, D. T. (2007). The First Book of Samuel. In R. L. Hubbard (Ed.), *NICOT*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

van Durme, K., Braet, C., & Goossens, L. (2014). Insecure attachment and eating pathology in early adolescence: Role of emotion regulation. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, *35*(1), 54-78.

Vanhoozer, K. J. (2010). *Remythologizing theology: Divine action, passion, and authorship*. Cambridge University Press.

Walton, J. H. (2001). *Genesis*. Zondervan.

Warren, R. (2010). Foreword. In A. Andrews (Ed.), *The kingdom life: A practical theology of discipleship and spiritual formation* (pp. 7-8). NavPress.

Waters, E., Crowell, J., Elliott, M., Corcoran, D., & Treboux, D. (2002). Bowlby's secure base theory and the social/personality psychology of attachment styles: Work (s) in progress. *Attachment & Human Development*, *4*(2), 230-242.

Watson, D. L., & Watson, P. D. (2014). *Contagious disciple-making: Leading others on a journey of discovery*. Thomas Nelson.

Watts, F. (2017). *Psychology, religion, and spirituality: Concepts and applications*. Cambridge University Press.

Wheeler, D. L. (2000). Confessional communities and public worldviews: A case study. In J. B. Cobb & C. H. Pinnock (Eds.), *Searching for an adequate God*. Eerdmans.

Whelan, D. J. (2003). Using attachment theory when placing siblings in foster care. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *20*, 21-36.

White, E. G. (1854). Duty of parents to their children. *The Review and Herald*, *6*(06), 45-46.

Willard, D., & Simpson, D. (2005). *Revolution of character: Discovering Christ's pattern for spiritual transformation*. NavPress.

Wilt, J. A., Exline, J. J., Grubbs, J. B., Park, C. L., & Pargament, K. I. (2016). God's role in suffering: Theodicies, divine struggle, and mental health. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, *8*(4), 352-362.

Wilt, J. A., Exline, J. J., Lindberg, M. J., Park, C. L., & Pargament, K. I. (2017). Theological beliefs about suffering and interactions with the divine. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, *9*(2), 137-147.

Wood, B. T., Worthington Jr, E. L., Exline, J. J., Yali, A. M., Aten, J. D., & McMinn, M. R. (2010). Development, refinement, and psychometric properties of the Attitudes Toward God Scale (ATGS-9). *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, *2*(3), 148-167.

Wright, N. T. (2005). *The last word: Beyond the Bible wars to a new understanding of the authority of Scripture* (1st ed.). Harper.

Yip, J., Ehrhardt, K., Black, H., & Walker, D. O. (2018). Attachment theory at work: A review and directions for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *39*(2), 185-198.

Younger, J., K. Lawson. (2002). *Judges/Ruth*. Zondervan.

Zahl, B. P., & Gibson, N. J. S. (2012). God representations, attachment to God, and satisfaction with life: A comparison of doctrinal and experiential representations of God in Christian young adults. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *22*(3), 216-230.

Zarzycka, B. (2019). Parental attachment styles and religious and spiritual struggle: A mediating effect of God image. *Journal of Family Issues*, *40*(5), 575-593.

VITA

KRISTINA MARIE (TYRRELL) FREED
DOB: 27 May 1973
tyrrell@andrews.edu

EDUCATION
PhD, Religious Education, anticipated 2023
> Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University

Master of Arts, Religious Education, 2013
> Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University

Bachelor of Arts, Business Administration, 1997
> Southwestern Adventist University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Adjunct Professor, 2019-present
> Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Linehaul Coordinator, 1994-2000
> FedEx Ground

PERSONAL
> Homemaker
> Mother of three sons
> Homeschool teacher
> Children's Ministry specialist

Volunteer activities	2008-present
Chair, Academy School Board	2016-2019
Member, Academy Finance Committee	2016-2019
Vice Chair, Academy School Board	2015-2016
Children's Ministries Coordinator, IMPACT Edmonton	2015
Consultant, Lighthouse of Hope Children's Ministries	2013
Consultant, Winnipeg Central Children's Ministries	2013
Presenter, Red River Valley Junior Academy in-service	2012
Presenter, Growing Children's Ministries	2012
Preacher, Healthy Spirituality sermon series	2012