Imaginatively Constructing God Concepts:
Exploring the Role of Imagination
in Gordon Kaufman's Theological Method

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"At the level of ordinary consciousness the individual man [woman] is the centre of everything, surrounded on all sides by what he [she] isn't. At the level of practical sense, or civilization, there's a human circumference, a little cultivated world with a human shape, fenced off from the jungle and inside the sea and the sky. But in the imagination anything goes that can be imagined, and the limit of the imagination is a totally human world. Here we recapture, in full consciousness, that original lost sense of identity with our surroundings, where there is nothing outside the mind of man [woman], or something identical with the mind of man [woman]. Religions present us with visions of eternal and infinite heavens or paradises which have the form of the cities and gardens of human civilization, like the Jerusalem and Eden of the Bible...They indicate too that in the human world the imagination has no limits, if you follow me."

Northrop Frye, The Educated Imagination
I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the theme of imagination has been gaining increased recognition within theological circles. Human imagination is viewed by some as foundational to theological reflection. There are in fact, proponents of this school of thought who would argue that theologies are actually imaginative constructions.

In keeping with the nature of imagination itself, the topic of theological imagination is broad and in many respects ambiguous. It does not easily lend itself to careful systems or logical constructs. It is not surprising then, that while there have been some attempts to write about various aspects of the topic, few writers have confronted the task of explicating a methodological presentation of theological imagination.

Gordon Kaufman has produced some of the more comprehensive work on this subject. Because Kaufman is expressly concerned to provide a reconstruction of theological method, his work provides a good starting point for introduction to the topic and the issues involved, as well as analysis and discussion.

Kaufman has been concerned for some time, as evidenced in his published essays, lectures and books to explore the adequacy of methods used to verify faith/ultimacy concepts, as well as the adequacy of those concepts themselves. The most common way of
testing the competency of such overarching "beliefs" is attempting to live by them. However, as Kaufman observes, this testing is never complete because it is beyond our capabilities to test the presumed truth about all of reality. Kaufman thus asserts that these "faiths" are unstable and vague.

Eventually, Kaufman focuses on the concept God, to determine whether it is relevant to human experience. With this analysis he moves away from revelational foundations of theology which he had previously accepted. Or, more to the point, he moves "behind" revelation in an effort to explore the presuppositions sustaining the doctrine of God. Kaufman suspects that these presuppositions may no longer be relevant to common human experience.

Kaufman proposes that the reality upon which theology is based is imaginatively constructed. Symbols or metaphors are derived from cultural experience and become one's perception of reality. This occurs over varying periods of time and within the context of any particular culture. In crediting human imagination with construction of God concepts, Kaufman prepares the way for re-imagining or re-construction of more adequate God concepts.

Initially, consideration will be given to tracing the development of Kaufman's thinking, showing the progression of his studies and writing to the point of his assertion that theological work is rooted in human imaginative construction. Kaufman's work evidences two consecutive stages of development, namely, a theological position that presupposes revelation, leading
to a replacing of revelation with imaginatively constructive activity.

Particular attention will be paid to Kaufman's view of imagination and its instrumental role in addressing foundational themes and methods within theology. This will necessitate some discussion of Kaufman's critique of revelation as foundational to the work of theology.

These theories require an evaluation of the relationship between theology and its traditional foundations: scripture, tradition and in particular, revelation. Traditionally, theology has been perceived as the explication of religion by theologians believing themselves to be objective. They are perceived as objective in that they work with the discipline of theology based on its solid foundations, which are not dependent on cultural or subjective influence.

Kaufman turns decidedly against tradition by wanting to do away with a criterion of objectivity, as well as by advocating personally, anthropologically based theology. Kaufman, in effect, authenticates or credits human culture as well as any significant religious belief, seeing in them life orienting capabilities. Kaufman's position with respect to this has been described as follows:

But though we are in no position to point to the existence of transcendent reality, we can and must show that there are ordinary meanings with referents in finite experience which are analogous to the theological use of "transcendence".
.... it is open to the believer to describe the context and situation in which the word "God" finds a use and in which it is accepted as meaningful. The accomplishment of these two tasks will not constitute a "proof" of God's existence, but it will meet the minimum philosophical requirement for intelligibility.\(^1\)

While acknowledging that Kaufman's work is significant because of its contribution to the reconstruction of Christian theology on a methodological foundation, and its expansion of the theological imagination, his formulations are, I shall argue, nevertheless, incomplete. Kaufman presents a one-dimensional picture of imagination which inevitably does a disservice to his perspective of the theological task.

Kaufman's preoccupation with imaginative construction ignores the receptive dimension of imagination. This facet of imagination receives the impressions and experiences of God's image and glory which are manifest throughout creation, and which may alternatively be called revelation. The "something lacking" in Kaufman's theology may be found in his complete dismissal of revelation. It is a built-in feature of our creatureliness that we may imagine God in many ways, which may make God appear more real and more meaningful to us. As Calvin Seerveld writes: "...God, in so far as God is revealed in the Scriptures and disclosed in creaturely reality is properly open to acts of our imagining."\(^2\) As Seerveld cautions:

The fact that God is able to be imagined does not mean, however, either that God is an imaginatum or that God's imaginativability provides the inside track or corner on knowing God. Who God is...
creaturely like is but one way the revealing LORD is accessible to human nature.  

In other words, this writer questions whether Kaufman, even when he gives free reign to imagination, is able to do without revelation. Human imagining of "God", it would seem, continues to depend on some Ultimate Reality which calls forth imaginings of that Ultimate.

In addition to questioning Kaufman's schema of imagination versus revelation, one particular theme of this paper will be to develop a fuller profile of imagination and its significance to theological work. Further, this paper will explore whether Kaufman's model can be modified to accommodate an acknowledgment of the necessity of "revelation" concepts, as well as what new life Kaufman's model of theological imagining can bring to our understandings of revelation.

II. PRESUPPOSING REVELATION

A. Toward God Constructs

In commencing a study of Gordon Kaufman's recent work regarding imaginative construction of God concepts, there is merit in tracing the development of his thought and theological system. In particular, it may be helpful to know how his earlier work progressed to and prompted his current position. In Relativism Knowledge and Faith (1960), Kaufman seeks initially to re-examine
"the anthropological basis of all our thinking and knowing." He then tries

...to come to some comprehension of the metaphysical and theological tasks as such, with reference to the structure of the knowing self to comprehend them in the context of a sufficiently broad anthropology to make possible understanding of what is actually happening in metaphysical and theological work.5

He further describes his purpose or approach as "theological anthropology" in that its fundamental character is understanding humankind in the context of relation to God and God in relation to humankind.

His Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective (1968), emphasized the "revelational foundations" of theology. Again, his approach was moderately anthropological6 though focusing on self-discovery and life meaning through revelation.

However paradoxical it may seem, we may be completely unaware of what thus is the most significant event of our lives, the "revelatory" event or process without which no moment of our existence could be apprehended as meaningful. But the birth in us of genuine self-understanding and self-knowledge - and thus real maturity and freedom - can occur only as we do become aware of this, the real center of our existence.7

God the Problem (1972), was an attempt to maintain the earlier position adopted in his Systematic Theology, that is, "revelational foundations" while balancing it with an increasing interest in the more "...experiential grounds of theology."8 This created however, a certain degree of tension in Kaufman's presentation as he attempted to defend "...the highly dialectical character of the notion of God"9 as both "a construct of the
human imagination" and "an objective reality". Consistent with earlier themes though, he still sought to integrate more of personhood and self-actualization into theology. Gradually this dialectic became even more significant for Kaufman with respect to actually rejecting a theological method based on the traditional doctrines of revelation.

Kaufman's books An Essay on Theological Method (1975; rev. ed. 1979) and The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God (1981), were the products of his second developmental stage, wherein imagination is offered as the alternative to traditional doctrines of revelation.

Theology is and always has been a human work: it is founded upon and interprets human historical events and experiences; it utilizes humanly created and shaped terms and concepts; it is carried out by human processes of meditation, reflection, ratiocination, speaking writing and reading.10

Kaufman continues to develop his theory within the context of his previous work attempting to understand the role of theology, or God concepts in offering direction and cohesion for human life. He writes:

I have become persuaded that theology is (and always has been) essentially a constructive work of the human imagination, an expression of the imagination's activity helping to provide orientation for human life through developing a symbolical 'picture' of the world round-about and of the human place within that world.11

Having briefly summarized the main tenets of Kaufman's writings, or more to the point, his imaginative theological constructions, a more indepth analysis will be attempted of his work.
Before proceeding further however, it is interesting to note the continuities which appear to be of interest to Kaufman throughout his writing. Kaufman has been consistent in his preoccupation with those themes that give persons some autonomy in relation to God. While "autonomy" may be a questionable goal or starting point for many theologians, Kaufman recognizes it in its "givenness" with respect to our "situation". The reality of that situation is separateness from God (whether by definition God is an imaginative construct or a revelatory phenomenon) concomitant with a degree of connectedness to God. While acknowledging our "connectedness" to God, Kaufman explores what is too often perceived as the "underside" or "dark side" of that relationship, namely the independent, autonomous human being.12

These themes which preoccupy Kaufman may be summarized as human thought as it relates to self-discovery and discovery of life meaning. They are explored within the context of some relatedness to and dependency on accepted God constructs (or constructs of God), as well as constructs of world. As Ronald G. Alexander quotes in his article "Theology as Creativity";

To what extent these concepts enrich man's life and experience is the determining factor of their reality and not their so-called objectivity.13

Constructs or concepts are as real as they are influential/helpful in the process of living life.

He [Kaufman] believes that the construct, world, provides us with orientation in respect to our experiences. World, as construct, gives us a sense
of wholeness lying behind our partial and fragmentary experiences.14

The construct "God" offers a new dimension to one's view of the world, providing, Kaufman believes, the world with humaneness. Theology, thus is creative and self-critical. Alexander comments:

It is this self-critical and self-correcting factor which keeps the Christian faith in a position of speaking relevantly to each new day.15

This theme of humaneness, will be discussed at greater length in later chapters.

B. Relative Experience

In Relativism Knowledge and Faith, Kaufman is interested to explore the impact of doubt on philosophy and theology. One of his purposes is to develop a better understanding of relativism within our culture. He observes that relativism is customarily perceived as something negative and suggests that instead it is a positive characteristic inherent within humankind.

Relativism not only frees us from regarding our own insights as necessarily true...we become freed from thought based on a static, absolutistic model of truth and thus are enabled to grasp certain kinds of truth not otherwise comprehensible.16

Kaufman is suggesting that previous types of thinking rejected any form of knowledge dependent upon the subjective standpoint. That subjective standpoint, and "the social
situation of the knower", were considered 'merely relative'.\textsuperscript{17}

Essentially his point is as follows:

...it is not legitimate to evaluate or refute relativistic theories simply by reference to ordinary logical or epistemological standards. For this begs the precise question with which relativism confronts us, namely, whether these epistemological standards themselves must be revised.\textsuperscript{18}

The difficulty relativism faces is accounting for its own position, that standpoint which allows it to see "...and analyze all other views as relative."\textsuperscript{19} Relativists fall into the same trap as their critics by trying to solve this dilemma by maintaining that a particular period or method or theory is somehow able to avoid relativization to concrete experience. Kaufman suggests that: "This common mode of escape really involves a capitulation to relativism by non-relativists and a capitulation to absolutism by relativists..."\textsuperscript{20}

Kaufman seeks to uncover the root source of relativistic thought; for example our perceptions of "what is the case" and "what ought to be the case". These perceptions are related to our values i.e. "what we value and what we regard as true." Substantiating these attitudes or opinions are reasons such as "what has previously been the case, within our particular cultural situation. However, this does not answer the question of what must be considered of value or true and why it should be considered so. To account for itself, relativism of this sort must either discover a standpoint which is understood not to be conditioned historically\textsuperscript{21} or it must
announce its own arbitrarily determined "valid standpoint". Without meeting these criteria, relativism cannot claim to be any more authentic or real than those views which it has eliminated because of their relativity to actual events or situations.

Kaufman calls this "external relativism" a more superficial form of relativizing. "Internal relativism" on the other hand involves an effort to "apprehend the norms" recognized from a different perspective, as norms, i.e. in terms of their very normativeness by attempting to "get inside" the different culture or viewpoint.22

For Kaufman, this allows a wider acceptance of differing viewpoints and perspectives. Different points of view represent or appear from the subject's own particular situation and in that context, may be regarded by the subject as truth. Of course the problem raised by this thinking is the universality of truth itself. Kaufman presents a twofold dilemma:

(a) How can we understand this fact that Truth Itself appears different when seen from different points of view? and (b) Is there any perspective which really reveals the Truth and in terms of which others, therefore, can be evaluated?23

Kaufman seeks a theory of knowledge that is able to account for its normative character as well as its being bound to the historical and psychological perspective/situation of the thinker. For him the solution lies in the direction of imagination and consciousness.
Imagination is not something to be contrasted with reality; it is the indispensable constructive activity through which we lift our pre-conscious \( \text{Enlebnisse} \) to the level in which we can think about them and interpret their significance in our over-all experience.\(^{24}\)

He suggests therefore that it is inappropriate to study philosophical or theological systems simply as abstract exercises of the intellect. Rather, they must be understood "...as a sort of living organism proceeding from the very life of the thinker."\(^{25}\)

Thought or consciousness then, always stem from a prior consciousness and there never is a first thought or first beginning place for a thought. Neither is an absolute or final conclusion ever arrived at.

Thus the philosophers' and theologians' systems serve as convenient summaries of certain tendencies of thought alive in the culture at any one given time.\(^{26}\)

Thinking constantly changes because of different individual personal histories. Kaufman describes philosophy and theology as history of past and/or present situations. To the extent that its thought system is rational, a society accepts as truth that which gives the most coherence and meaning to its experience. "Ultimately, this means that we must assume that the presuppositions on which our interpretations are based conform with the structure of reality itself."\(^{27}\) At this earlier stage in the development of his theological method, Kaufman called these presuppositions, faith.
Theology, then, is concerned with those faith presuppositions which contribute to knowledge and metaphysical activity. Also included are dimensions of feeling and will, i.e. theology is not merely cognitive activity. The emphasis in theology for Kaufman is not determining whether or not a particular faith "is justified or is illusion", or whether or not there is a God. His concern is to determine what it is that overcomes meaninglessness for individuals, and what it is they live by. These faith presuppositions are his proofs for God's existence. "What can be established is that man cannot live without a faith in something that ultimately supports his finite historically relative existence.28

Kaufman has laid considerable ground work for further study regarding the significance of personal history and imagination in conceptualizing God. He is very clearly influenced by Paul Tillich in his emphasis on individual meaning and value.29 However, as will be observed in his later writings, Kaufman is not completely Tillichian in the sense of placing all importance in these ultimate realities or concerns. As Michael McLain notes in "On Theological Models", he fails to see how they can connect at all "...with the Judeo-Christian conception of a 'personal' God who 'acts'."30 Kaufman, however, is still guided by and committed to, a theistic theology at this stage in his theological development. I suspect that this commitment is not one so much of intellectual determination as cultural/religious tradition at this point in Kaufman's work. Perhaps
this is why as McLain implies, Kaufman's intellectual assertions hardly reflect his presumed faith commitment to a "Christian" God.

Kaufman is very much presupposing revelatory acts of God but allowing room for individual and/or cultural appropriation of experience with or of God. He effectively opens up religious experience from too narrow confines of understanding and allows for different cultural and personal interpretation while still maintaining the goal of seeking a universal truth. There is also an accommodation in his perspective for more personal involvement in theologizing. While acknowledging the importance and significance of cultural context, Kaufman seeks to increase individual interpretation of religious experience.

C. Defining Revelation

In seeking to understand the two main stages of Kaufman's theological work, it is critical to explore some of the factors which contributed to his shifts in thinking and religious commitment. This is true in particular of his abandoning revelation in favour of a "theology of imagination". I believe that one contributing element to this demarcation, is Kaufman's understanding of revelation.

At one time, Kaufman defined theology as the study of the meaning of the word God. He observes that notions of God appear "mythological", because they involve that which is "outside" or "beyond" the experienced world.
Because in our time truth and even meaning are increasingly conceived in terms of directly experienced and experienceable realities such mythological conceptions and ways of thinking have become highly suspect to many, and it may even be claimed that the idea of God can be given no consistent content or meaning.31

It is this transcendental motif however, which makes it possible to conceive of God as universal and ultimate. Because he stands "outside" the world as Creator, God can relate significantly to all dimensions of being "within" the world. This locating of God "outside" or "beyond" the world leads Kaufman to define revelation as:

...that locus in experience through which men discover themselves in relation to the ultimately real, the norm or standard in terms of which all reality is defined for them, and beside which, therefore, all other realities are necessarily as of lesser significance and meaning.32

The implication however, of this definition, is that revelation can never be understood "...simply by studying others' reports of so-called revelations."33

Until one perceives the ultimate significance of something for oneself then it cannot be revelation for them. This also implies that a characteristic of selfhood is its historicity, meaning that the "...ontological foundations of our deepest convictions are in history."34 An individual's belief systems and foundational values develop from a past which is both social and personal. In our lives we experience certain significant moments or times around which the remainder of events in our lives focus. These moments provide special meaning and are formative in personality and character development.
Mircea Eliade discusses the importance of these significant moments in his book *The Sacred and the Profane*. Eliade explores a number of parallels between primitive cultures' rites and rituals and those of moderns. It is interesting to note how many of these parallels remain true at some level today. For example, he writes of how "...human existence attains completion through a series of 'passage rites' in short, by successive initiations." We easily point to these various sorts of tribal customs and ceremonies within "primitive" cultures and yet often fail to locate our own cultural initiation rites.

Some examples of such significant moments would be, birthdays, baptism, graduations, marriage and other more annual events such as fathers' day, mothers' day, New Year's anniversaries, Valentines etc. These formal rituals represent the "smaller" or seemingly less significant moments of life that contribute to the completion of a person's development.

Eliade's emphasis is an important one, requiring us to consider the significance of our personal and broader cultural history in shaping our belief systems and behaviour. Like Tillich, Eliade believes that virtually everything has religious significance.

Often persons are not able to pinpoint these significant moments that open up meaning for them. It is also not always possible to determine their contribution to the formative process. Revelation is a "disclosure" or "unveiling", and
as such, presupposes the activity of an agent of some sort impacting upon the subject. Kaufman compares this process of personal knowledge with oneself sharing herself with another, offering a paradigm upon which the concept of revelation is modelled.

These ideas raise many questions regarding the nature of the revelatory experience, the method of communication, or transmission of information and the authenticity of such experience if indeed it is such an individual matter. Is there a norm for the content of revelation, or is it consistent to any degree from person to person? In responding to these questions, Kaufman outlines two main points regarding revelation, which he later develops:

(a) **as historical event**, God's act cannot be directly experienced but must be mediated to us by means of the appropriate historical evidences and methods; (b) **as revelation** of the One who transcends all history, God's act is not immediately present even in the historical reconstruction of the person-event Jesus Christ, but must be mediated through this event as received by faith.37

The basic character of the Christian idea of God has been formed by God's self-manifestation throughout the events of biblical history, culminating in the events of the life of Christ. Revelation though, is not composed of specific truths and doctrines but of God. Dogma and doctrine develop from human reflection on God's act;

...they are not what is revealed, but emerge in man's attempt to apprehend, understand, and speak about God's self-manifestation. However indispensable they may be, they are always secondary and derivative, not archetypal or primary.38
It is God's self-revelation, particularly in the person-event of Jesus Christ which must be acknowledged as the criterion for judging revelatory experience. Kaufman sees human imagination as being that medium through which the finite is able to transcend itself, experiencing revelation. Like Tillich, Kaufman believes that it is through symbols created by the human imagination that God is known. However, Kaufman has not provided any method for determining which images may in fact be revelatory of God. Images could simply represent some aspect of the finite world, or they could be "imaginary". Kaufman himself poses the question: "...in what mode is imagination properly guided by the real?" His response:

If we postulate a power in imagination itself to fathom the real...we have an interesting theological aestheticism, but no real reason to call our view "Christian,"...our imagination must be controlled by the structure of finite being as such (analogia entis) or by the reality revealed to faith (analogia Christi).

If it is the case that our imagination is directed by the "reality revealed to faith" the imagination would be guided by the authority of the historical person-event Jesus Christ. Kaufman suggests that this would occur within the context of "our historical imagination" as opposed to simply the general category of imagination as Tillich suggests.

Theological tradition and doctrine appear significant as criteria for determining the value of symbols and images. However, Kaufman still does not offer much clarity. It would seem that he advocates imagined, symbolic conceptions of God,
but hesitates to become too specific in describing our

categorizing those images. He writes:

There is no revealed theology; there is only the
revealed God whom we must seek to apprehend and
understand theologically with the aid of whatever
human conceptions are at hand.42

The question that remains is how can these available, finite,
conceptions represent God without limiting him or undermining
his "otherness" and "beyondness"? If nothing within our
world can be identified directly as a referent for the term
"God", what meaning does the God - word have?

D. Understanding the God - Word

In his book God the Problem, Kaufman utilized the model
of agency in his efforts to make the notion of God intelligible.

God is taken to be one who acți - to create the
world and everything in it, to govern the world
in accord with his sovereign purposes and respond
to and interact with his creatures, to bring the
world and all beings in it to the completion and
fulfillment that he originally posited for them. 43

He acknowledges that this approach has its problems, however
he wants to see how this model may be developed.

Because God's revealed truth is seen as the "ultimate
court of appeal" for theology it is important to determine what,
or where this truth is. Kaufman cannot accept that it is in the
bible which he believes "...no longer has unique authority for
Western man. It has become a great but archaic monument in our midst -
It is a reminder of where we once were - but no longer are." He believes that the bible is no longer the word of God to persons. It is necessary that a criterion be developed for interpreting the claims of the bible, enabling us to know to what degree as modern people, we should take it seriously.

The Bible, of course, is not a historical record of all God's dealings with men; but taken as a whole, it does report those dealings within which God became clearly defined in human consciousness and through which, therefore, God can be said to have revealed himself to mankind.

Kaufman arrives at the conclusion that theological method can no longer be based on "God's revelation" as it is understood to be literal translation of scripture. Rather, that basis itself must be subjected to criticism, reconstruction or reconfirmation. Theology cannot represent the whole of truth, but rather one way of looking at the human condition. Theology must be prepared to accommodate other disciplines such as science and history, though still recognizing its own historical foundations. Reciprocally, theology as an interpretation of man, the world and "God" can be of significant value to scientific study.

Because of the advancement of scientific study, Kaufman believes that "mythological explanations" are no longer satisfactory to people in attempting to understand their world and themselves. One must presume that he is referring to certain established dogma or tradition, though he doesn't clearly distinguish which might be ignored or in fact, eradicated. Interestingly, Kaufman still feels it is significant
and contemporarily meaningful to speak not only of this world but of "God".

One possible reason for this is his attachment to the concept/image of Christ. Kaufman holds tenaciously throughout his work to a humanistic/Christ figure which offers the humanizing element to theological work and to life itself.\textsuperscript{46} Retaining Christ in his system requires a God/Father figure, however remotely he may refer or relate to same.

In fact, Kaufman's solution to at least one of his God problems is to perceive of the idea of God as functioning as

\begin{quote}
...a limiting concept, that is, a concept that does not primarily have content in its own right drawn directly out of a specific experience, but refers to that which we do not know but which is the ultimate limit of all our experiences.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

Thus, man's awareness of finitude prompts notions of another larger reality.

Kaufman outlines four types of limiting experiences which are models indicating how the ultimate Limit can be conceived:

(a) Personal experience of physical limitations through encounter with resistence of material objects;

(b) Personal experience of inner limitations of self, particularly with respect to illness, weakness, failure or exhaustion;

(c) Experience of external personal limitations created by other persons with ideas or plans contrary to one's own;
Experience of those normative restrictions upon persons by society, culture or community i.e. "...distinctions [such] as true-false, real-illusory, good-bad, right-wrong, beautiful-ugly..."48

Any of these limiting experiences may provoke consciousness of a more "general concept of limitation or finitude" in turn raising the question of what agent is creating these confines or limits. The ultimate Limit is not experienced immediately, but becomes known through the mediation of "...reflection on and generalization of particular experiences of limitation;"49

In equating God with limitation, Kaufman feels he has made a significant contribution to God language. By finding a basis in our own awareness and knowledge of Limit, faith gains intellectual, cognitive significance, being more than simply feeling.50

Faith, we can now see, is that stance in which the "experience" of the ultimate Limit is apprehended as the medium of the encounter with God...unfaith is that attitude which, unable to "leap beyond" the ultimate Limit, finds itself always attending instead to the mere Limit as such.51

Because God is transcendent of human experience of the world he cannot be identified with or described by anything within the world. To identify God with a particular object within the world would be idolatrous. Again, the question arises; what are we speaking of when we speak of God? Kaufman puts forward his theory of the "available God". The "available God" being an immediate referent that allows us to use the word
"God". It is essentially an "imaginative construct" that we are able to utilize for practical purposes.

Whatever knowledge we may claim to have of him, it will be mediated through, and never go beyond, the imaginative construct that is our available God. The "real God" must always remain a transcendent unknown, a mere point of reference.52

One of the practical purposes of the "available God" is to provide an ultimate context for life. "That he is an appropriate symbolization of a transcendently real God is a postulate of faith which can be justified only in practical terms."53

These two points, emphasis on a practical God (or a God who is relevant to human life) and God as a "suitable" symbol, were two more contributing factors in Kaufman's shift from a revelational base to perceiving imagination as the basis of all thinking of or knowing about God. In fact, they may have been two of the key elements that prompted his dismissal of revelation, initiating the second stage of his developing theological method. Essentially, Kaufman was no longer able to recognize the traditional Christian God as a suitable symbol representing fulfillment of humankind in the world, and in that respect this "revealed God" could no longer be viewed as a suitable ultimate context for life. The fact (for Kaufman) that the symbol required revisions, negated the authority and possibility of revelation. Rather, imaginative reconstruction of God concepts, became his method of arriving at and understanding ultimate reality or ultimacy symbols.
Kaufman then concentrated his efforts on refuting the authority of revelation and asserting instead, the significance of human imaginative construction of God concepts, occurring within historical context as a part of particular cultural development.

III. IMAGINATION REPLACING REVELATION

A. Imagination Over Against Revelation - An Introduction

God is generally thought of as an object that is potentially perceivable, modelled after a person who can speak and act. Similarly, the world is also seen as a perceivable object - though we can never see it as that within its entire scope, because we are part of it.

With a perceivable object, we put together our concept on the basis of abstraction and generalization from percepts; but if there are no direct percepts of God how - and out of what - is this concept constructed? As long as the basic schema is unquestioned, this problem remains concealed by belief in revelation. Any doubts about God's revelation lead potentially to a breakdown of the entire system.

Kaufman notes that traditional theology assumed that God exists and the name "God" refers to a "real being". The whole premise took for granted the objectivity of God.

It became clear that there was no way to jump out of our idea of God - our construct of God - to God himself as an objective reality. If
God is really completely objective to and distinct from all our ideas, he is irrelevant to us in every respect, and we may as well lead our lives with no reference to or concern about him.55

The idea of "God" and "world" understood as human constructs as suggested by Kant has played an important role in Kaufman's thinking.

Kant observed that ideas such as "God" and "world" fulfilled specific functions in our thinking that set them apart from other ideas such as "plant" or "table". As Kaufman notes:

While the latter are used to organize and classify elements of experience directly, thus helping to make possible experience itself and serving as the vehicles through which experience is cognized, the former "regulative ideas" function at a remove from direct perception or experience: they are used for ordering and organizing our conceptions or knowledge.56

The "world" being beyond the scope of direct perception is improperly perceived as an object. It defines the time and space, beginning and end categorizing that would properly qualify it as a directly perceived object. Neither is it empirically "testable" or fully observable.

These questions, which are simply unanswerable when the world is treated as an objective reality, are dissolved when we recognize that the concept of world is a construct of the mind, a heuristic device by means of which the mind orders its own contents but the objective referent for which we have no way of discovering.57
The concept "God" is even broader in scope than the concept "world", functioning as a "...unifier of all experience and concepts...".58

The significance of Kant's work with respect to its influencing Kaufman was in essence:

...his discovery that the concepts or images of God and the world are imaginative constructs, created by the mind for certain intra-mental functions, and thus of a different logical order than the concepts and images which we have of the objects of experience.59

Kaufman describes the step toward recognition that theological concepts are in essence imaginative constructs as a step toward second-order theology. Second-order theology involves analysis of other theological schemas and determination of their significance (if any) for human life. Kaufman feels it is at this level that most contemporary theologians find themselves. What Kaufman advocates is a movement toward third-order theology.

Third-order theology would proceed from an acknowledgement that all theological positions find their origin in imaginative construction, to an attempt to deliberately construct concepts of God and the world. Kaufman describes this as:

...constructing a world the fundamental design of which is not found in the materials themselves but is employed to give them a significant order and meaning. "World" and "God" are not objects directly describable but are constructs or images by means of which men and women: (a) conceive or picture the multiplicity and plurality of experience and life as having some unity, order

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and wholeness (the concept or image of world), and (b) grasp this ordered context of life not as ultimately threatening or even as merely neutral with respect to what is humanly valuable and meaningful, but as informed by purpose, meaning and loving care (the concept or image of God).°0

This is where Kaufman's strong emphasis on the Christ figure comes into play, modifying and humanizing traditional conceptions of a stern, remote and unapproachable God. Rather, as will be discussed further on in this paper, Christ becomes a stronger element in theology, playing a mediating role between God and humankind, and in so doing, lessening the severity of God's perceived image.

The "implied" practical implications of Kaufman's third-order theology are increased individual involvement in identifying personal ordering principles or images, and at the same time, acknowledging the significance of many facets of life in the so-called "religious dimension" of life. As Kaufman writes:

...it is the ordering of experience in such a way as to make it possible to see meaning in it, to see what place human life has within the whole of reality, and thus to see what we can do, how we should act.61

Human experience is thus understood to be significant to life and its intended purpose and meaning. Kaufman is striving to move beyond traditional views which too often perceive life experience as distinct from and alien to the "higher" meaning of life, this higher meaning being a vague, distant, "pleasant", meaningful, eschatological future.

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To better understand the mechanics of Kaufman's proposed third-order theology, it will be helpful to look at in some detail, his analysis of pre-conscious experience as it relates to development of revelation concepts and/or constructions of God. This will precede a more indepth investigation of Kaufman's method of imaginative construction, toward third-order theology.

B. Revelation and Developmental Stages of Consciousness

Kaufman questions how, as limited, created beings we arrive at a remote and divine God concept. Traditionally the response has been that theology is based upon God's revelation, however, Kaufman suggests that the concept "God's revelation" has been arrived at through many presuppositions. "Like any others, these concepts have been created and developed in and through human processes of reflection on life and interpretation of experience."² Culture, history and experience have provided the basis for particular theologies.

There is no such thing as a raw pre-linguistic experience of "transcendence," say, as distinguished from the experience of "ultimacy" or of the "infinite". Each of these "experiences" is shaped, delimited and informed by the linguistic symbols which also name it. Without those symbols to guide our consciousness these "experiences" would not be available to us at all.³
Religious experience (like any other experience) is a rich compilation of experiences, observations, impressions and learning, but never a pristine experience unsullied by prior concepts and linguistic understanding. To put it more succinctly, Kaufman believes religious experience cannot provide us with a legitimate beginning for theological work. Rather, it is the structure of religious or theological tradition and its expression through language which may provide a more pre-theoretical starting point.

While crediting Kaufman with good intentions to emphasize the significance of religious and cultural tradition in organizing and interpreting religious experience, I believe he does so at the expense of experience itself. His enthusiasm carries him too far in actually pitting experience against linguistic/cultural symbols. For example, while it is true that without symbols, experience is not named, that fact does not preclude the "existence" of the experience itself. Kaufman appears to be creating categories of dependency, i.e. symbol first and subsequently experience, followed, presumably by interpretation. However, it is much more a matter of inter-dependency and process. Religious experience does not need to be excluded from providing a valid starting point for theological work. It is one of many elements or modes within a multi-modal process which provides communication between the world itself and humankind as well as between and among persons.
However, to better understand how and why Kaufman arrives at his position it will be helpful to offer some analysis of his earlier book *Relativism, Knowledge and Faith*. His premise in the book is: "The fact that man theologizes is an anthropological fact which must and can be understood anthropologically." In establishing this as fact he explores the process whereby "situational factors" enter into the "cognitive process". He discusses early developmental stages of consciousness, particularly those experiences of "drives" or urges which have met with sensations of resistance. These experiences give rise in turn to a more explicit consciousness of the initial drive, as well as what Kaufman calls the "limits beyond".

We eventually discover that what is beyond us limits our every drive and intention in many ways and what restricts us becomes viewed as a highly articulated reality over against us. But it is out of this primitive experience of something unknown, limiting and defining and restricting our actions, that our concept of reality eventually develops, along with the criteria for distinguishing the real and the unreal from each other. The overwhelming conviction we have of the reality of the external world arises from the fact that our consciousness of the world is rooted in the direct and unavoidable encounter of our wills with that which restricts them.

This leads Kaufman to conclude that a subject-object polarity exists in the very early stages of conscious experience. Knowledge of the subject can be gained from within and without. As subject, I can have knowledge of myself that is unavailable to me with respect to any object. However, we can only have external knowledge of the object, never knowledge from within. It is because of this that greater knowledge of the subject
can influence knowledge of the object as self-understanding
often used analogically as an aid in interpretation of "objects".

Thus our underlying conception of external reality
as a structure of parts all related to one another
in some way which we can come to know is an
analogical interpretation of the object in terms of
our inner experience as subjects centred in a
unified purposing system which unites past and
future within the present. (All of this is accomplished
through a complicated process involving memory,
attention, imagination, and language...)

We all have developed, structural systems by which we
understand or are conscious of, the world around us. Our
understanding of the object pole corresponds to our
understanding of ourselves as subject. Initially the distinctions
are quite broad and there is simply an awareness of the polarity.
However, there develops a stronger consciousness of identifi-
cation with the subjective pole and the objective pole
continues to represent limit over against subject. We begin
to experience a self-consciousness in relation to others whom
we have become conscious of.

...but of our repeated contacts with the objective
pole we gradually come to distinguish variations
and differences in the nature of those contacts
and corresponding variations in emotional and
volitional activity within us, and eventually the
structures of world and self emerge in fairly
well defined and articulated form.

Each articulation is necessarily dependent upon the self's
prior activities and experience, and these relate to present
experience through memory and imagination. This collection
of perceptions, memories and ideas, all converging from the
past provide "the framework of interpretation" through which
Kaufman makes an interesting point regarding the historical nature of this framework noting that:

Because of the constant flow of time, we can never grasp with thought our experience, or even our ideas, directly in the moment of consciousness itself. We know such processes only through memory. This means that all our knowledge, including scientific and philosophical knowledge, is historical knowledge in the sense that it depends upon interpretation of physical symbols, which have no meaning or significance apart from interpretation and such interpretation always involves *Nachdenken* and *Verstehen*.  

His analysis offers a solid anthropological foundation to knowledge in general and religious knowledge in particular. He also credits that knowledge as well as self with shaping life. It makes all of our thought and experience significant in shaping future thought and experience, and in that respect validates the very small (as well as larger and more obviously significant) or seemingly insignificant aspects of life.

Language becomes an important dimension in the development of consciousness of self. It is critical to the process of raising aspects of simpler levels of consciousness to more complex levels.

Language no longer remains simply expressive; it also becomes denotative: we become enabled consciously to compare and contrast and distinguish various aspects of our experience and to communicate those distinctions to others.

Language is able to express thought both internally and externally. It articulates or *mention* our thoughts by putting words or gestures or actions to them.
Another characteristic of language is its facility for establishing categories. Kaufman points out that these "concepts and categories" despite their entrenchment as normative within our society, sometimes lose meaning for us and appear to be outside our actual life experiences. Kaufman provides such examples as "church", "salvation", "sacraments", "heaven" and "hell".

The language of the church and of scripture... including their so-called religious or theological terms, is common language in the societies and cultures where church and scripture are found. It is with this common language and these ordinary uses that theology actually begins, not with special or technical meanings alleged to be authoritative because "revealed" by God.

While this may seem contradictory respecting what Kaufman previously attested to regarding the primary role of linguistic symbols, he is still speaking of structure and symbol as key. Note that it is with "common language" and its "ordinary uses" that theology begins. Kaufman, perhaps confusingly, categorizes "technical meanings" with religious experience, referring to what are often seen as revelatory experiences with very specific, particular and special meanings, communicated immediately and authoritatively by and through the experience.

Kaufman suggests that while God is a concept beyond perception, the concept God, has customarily been utilized as an available referent. God has been viewed largely in anthropomorphic terms as a speaking, acting person. This occurs similarly with the concept of the world which is not an "objectively" perceivable object.
Despite all claims that we human beings can never come to know God in his essence, what was in fact presented by theologians was an elaborate schema of interpretation which set out what it was believed God actually was, and what humanity and the world were, and how they were related to each other.73

One critical aspect of this system was the understanding that God was the source of "perfect knowledge" of all persons and things. Human beings were by contrast quite removed from such knowledge, being part of a world of sin, full of error and untruth. These presuppositions then led naturally into descriptions of a God who communicates knowledge to humankind. Knowledge of God was thus understood to be received from God as revelation.

In his earlier work, particularly Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, Kaufman expresses no particular difficulty with the connection between presuppositions held in faith and revelation. He was simply concerned that credit be given to those faith-presuppositions as significantly directional. While still accommodating, indeed pre-supposing revelatory acts of God he was also wishing to acknowledge the individual and/or cultural appropriation of experience with or of God as foundational.

Kaufman becomes more interested in the role imagination plays in our "knowledge" about God, and less willing to continue to give any credence to revelation as a source of information about God. Acknowledging the interpreting influences of
language and culture in this activity, Kaufman writes:

Of course no individual human mind constructs the idea of God from scratch. All thinking about God and all devotion to God take place within a cultural and linguistic context in which the notion of God has already been highly developed through the imaginative work of many preceding generations.  

Kaufman felt challenged to restructure the purpose and methodology of theology, moving away from the idea of God as an "object" towards God as imaginative construct. Part of his reason for doing so, apart from his theories of imagination was to make theology conversant with other disciplines such as science and history; his assumption being that the revelational model did not distinguish itself as based sufficiently upon reason.

Kaufman's further contention with the revelational model was that it excluded many other aspects of the created order from being credited with theological significance.

Or, to put the same point in more traditional theological language, if it is God, the Creator of all things both visible and invisible, about whom we are attempting to speak in theology, any single point in the created order ought to be as valid as any other for a point of departure for theological talk.

Of course, what Kaufman overlooked, is the fact that any point in the created order may in fact be described as revelatory. His intention was however, to get away from making an issue of where one's theological starting point might be, to explore the movement from humankind to God, or, from creaturely to ultimate.
As Kaufman points out, exploration of that movement has often been circumvented because of "...the claim that theology is rooted in and founded upon God's revelation, vouchsafed to humankind in the biblical witness or in authoritative church pronouncement." This position (for Kaufman) presumes that theology is taken as fact or dogma. The theologian works with these pronouncements, serving a function of analyzing and interpreting this data.

In this sense, it may be held, theology always presupposes a certain faith, namely the faith that God has in fact revealed himself, and this faith is not itself subject to theological questioning or doubt.

While Kaufman does present a reasonable case for expanding, updating and modifying the revelational model, his reasons for abandoning it are not substantial enough to warrant such a drastic move. One difficulty implicit in Kaufman's proposal may account for his over-enthusiasm in discarding revelation from his theological methodology. In the preface to An Essay on Theological Method, he writes:

Theology is thus a deliberate activity in which men and women are attempting to achieve certain specifiable ends; it is not essentially, as is religious faith, orientation of the whole self, or a response of trust or devotion spontaneously evoked by God. More traditionally expressed: faith is a gift of God; theology is human work.

While it is important to separate theology as scientific study of faith from religious faith itself, eventually Kaufman takes the more extreme and dubious position of separating faith and theology to the point that there is no acknowledgment of the
faith presupposition motivating all scientific work (including theology). Theology then becomes a neutral exercise of reason, thus removing any vestiges of religious faith from theology.

Kaufman very readily equates revelation with religious faith and, as mentioned in the quote, categorizes it as spontaneous response. It is difficult to see how he can make so clear a distinction between theology and religious faith, with the implicit understanding that faith has no part in theological work. Theology is described as "human work" and curiously Kaufman fails to see the difficulty placing it in opposition to faith. Religious faith aided by imagination and revelational experience (of varying sorts) is also human work and contributes to theological reflection and position. And reciprocally, established theological tradition and dogma influence faith orientation and experience.

I propose that Kaufman's view of revelation has been inadequate precisely because of his limited view of the role of religious faith, thus preventing him from integrating revelation and imagination to "construct" a more enriched theology. In particular, this may be attributed to an underdeveloped view of creation and creaturely reflection of God's image. Secondly, it would appear that while recognizing the significance of "ultimate concern", Kaufman fails to recognize the crucial integrality of faith with history both personal and cultural, and its formative powers, also for theological science. As Avery Dulles writes:

Biblical faith commends itself to reason insofar as it gives to history an intelligibility for
which philosophy, unaided by revelation, would search in vain. In an age dominated by historical consciousness, historical revelation can offer an answer to a widespread quest for meaning and purpose in history.\textsuperscript{79}

Kaufman appears to overlook the fact that commitment to the reality of an imaginative contract is also based on faith as much as on reason. My suspicion with regard to the problem raised above is that Kaufman has been too quick to make imagination an isolated mode, rather than a mode existing and functioning in relation to and dependent upon many other modes of being. While the next section will explore Kaufman's concepts of imagination, the following section will look at the possibility of Kaufman having created a false dichotomy between revelation and imagination.

C. Imaginative Reconstruction of Theological Method

Kaufman has good motivation for engaging in what he describes as "critical reconstruction" of theology. He is concerned to change traditional themes and symbols that have lost their meaning for us, or in some cases have become oppressive to parts of society. One example which he gives is the way in which symbols such as "father" and "lord" have impacted negatively upon women. He describes his work as:

...a reconstruction for which there is no clear precedent or legitimation in the Bible (or elsewhere in the tradition), since the Bible itself perpetrates and is a major source of the problem - that helped me to see that theology could no longer be properly understood as contemporary re-translation and re-presentation of traditional themes...\textsuperscript{80}
He fails to see for example, how re-workings of consistently patriarchal themes within scripture will prove any more helpful to women.

Concomitant with "theological tradition" which has developed throughout history, has emerged what Kaufman calls "the theological imagination". Thinking or construction of God concepts occurs within an historical setting, and should be ongoing work. Notions of and about God have been developed throughout history and re-thought or further developed by succeeding generations.

The idea of God...is in many ways the mind's supreme imaginative construct, related to all other dimensions, realities, and qualities of experience and the world and yet seen as distinct from and grounding them all.  

This is in part what makes the idea of God appear ultimate and transcendent.

The influence of the bible on Western thinking regarding God is all-encompassing. The bible has been perceived as the record of God's revelation to humankind, i.e. the "word of God". Its authority has for many, been virtually complete:

...it therefore carried an authority powerful enough to override ordinary human experience and rational argument. Although the "creator of the heavens and the earth" was not an object available for direct confrontation and observation, and knowledge about God could not be gained in any ordinary way, this lack had been, in God's graciousness and mercy, divinely supplied in and through the Bible.  

Kaufman believes that ideas about or of God are for the most part "inherited" from one's particular culture and the previous religious experience of other believers. He also sees scripture
itself as representing prior tradition and culture and its experience and constructs of God. He feels that the task we now face is to determine to what degree we should retain "...biblical motifs and images in our own contemporary attempts to construct an adequate concept of God." The significance of the bible then, lies not in any authority it may claim but rather from its "...utility for getting at the image/concept of God." Recognizing the importance of the "community of beliefs" and culture's contribution to religious ideas, Kaufman then delimits creaturely input into this activity by suggesting that human finitude conceals knowledge of God. The "creator of the heavens and the earth" was "an object available for direct confrontation and observation", and knowledge about God was no longer able to be gained in those ordinary ways because of sin, not creaturely "finitude". Rather, "creaturely finitude" became a by-product (in this respect) of sin.

It is still essential to Kaufman to retain a "framework of interpretation" which sees God as "ultimate point of reference", however, the chief purpose of the framework is to provide meaning, placing life within a purposive context. Kaufman suggests that a worldview or picture of God may be constructed with symbols more valid for and representational of life today.

...in the mind's construction of the image/concept of God the ordinary relation of subject and predicate is reversed. Instead of the subject (God) being a given to which the various predicate adjectives are
then assigned, here the descriptive terms themselves are the building blocks which the imagination uses in putting together its conception.85

The referent of theological vocabulary is not a directly observable object or reality.

For this reason it is a mistake to take over traditional vocabulary and methods uncritically, since these were worked out largely on the assumption that God-language was directly objectivist or referential, and thus they are usually cast in a reifying mode.86

Because Kaufman does not believe that theology has as its starting point an "authoritative divine revelation", it is important to know by what criteria one can determine when an adequate concept of God has been arrived at. From a Tillichian perspective, is not any influencing/effective "ultimate concern" adequate for the individual under its influence? In his review of The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God, Garrett Green asks why (in view of Kaufman's theories) we should want to become involved in this God construction to begin with.

Kaufman's answer makes an important anthropological assumption which really amounts to a definition of religion, or at least of its theological (and not merely Christian) component. Constructing the concept of God is a way of "dealing with the inescapable human problem of orientation in life and in the world" (1981, 14).87

Kaufman again stresses that our "framework of interpretation" is never an entirely neutral construct, in that it is always shaped by our worldview situation.

We are always already living in and operating out of one (or more) world-picture(s). The most we can hope, therefore, is to become sufficiently
conscious of the stance within which we are living and acting so as to become critical of it to some degree, and thus in a position significantly to reconstruct it.88

The challenge is to become as conscious as possible of the characteristics of our worldview to better understand how it shapes our constructs of God. While this may be a goal to strive for, it hardly provides a reasoned criteria for, or structure of adequate God constructs.

As products of our worldview situation it is difficult to imagine how we can position ourselves to critically evaluate that worldview. As Kaufman asserts regarding God and the world, a worldview situation is also not a perceivable object. We can never see it in its totality or entirely grasp its significance. While I think he is correct to stress that we must inform ourselves of the characteristics of our worldview, a worldview is insufficient to be that which directs and controls life in an absolute sense. A worldview situation is the product of an already established or created world, it has no ex nihilo powers and no eschatological capabilities. It may be better understood as a constructed mediation between humankind and God.

James Olthuis expands on this quality of worldviews in his article "On Worldviews". Specifically, he defines the function of worldviews as a -

medium of mediation and integration in a two-way movement between the commitment of faith and all the other modes of human experience. Certainty received in the surrender of faith leads to a way of living via a worldview. Concomitantly, a way of life, in all of its modes and moments, influences the commitment of faith via the mediation of a worldview.89
While not actually acknowledging worldviews' capacity to function as a connection between a transcendent God and finite humanity he does note that:

It [worldview] is a medium through which the ultimate commitment of faith plays out its leading and integrating role in daily life. Simultaneously, a worldview is a medium by which daily life experiences can either call faith into question or confirm it.90

Given his description of worldview acting as a medium for faith he is in effect affirming the capacity of worldview as a form of mediation between humankind and God. Similarly to my critique of Kaufman, Olthuis is also concerned that worldviews not be seen as "...the pure expression of faith or the infallible bearers of truth."91

One could easily understand Kaufman to be asserting the predominance of worldview, even to the point of it being the component of God constructs. Worldview then becomes autonomous, subject to no criteria other than its own inherent self-correcting facility. God is so far removed from one's experience that he doesn't really enter into the picture at all in any significant way.

In his review of The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God, Douglas Ottati comments:

For Kaufman, God remains an essentially incompre- sensible mystery, a ground of being without any specifiable relationship to an enduring moral order. About the only place Kaufman can go to obtain theological support for moral directives is to the normative humanity of Jesus.92
While Kaufman may have difficulty clarifying his position regarding God's existence there are aspects of the symbol God which he considers helpful.

...God continues to symbolize that which is outside and other than the human, that which effectively relativizes present human existence and consciousness, that which draws the human out of itself, opening it to new possibilities in the future.93

The two significant elements of God which he wishes to retain are the humanity of God and its effectiveness in making persons fully human, and God's transcendence or "radical otherness". For the purposes of this paper, we will be focusing on the first point, the humanity of God.

As discussed previously, Kaufman offers Jesus as a paradigm upon which we can base our ideas of humaneness (both God's and ours). Jesus serves as a noncontroversial referent for defining what is "authentically human".94 Of course, this immediately presents the problem raised earlier by Kaufman regarding the inadequacy of many traditional "symbols" for women. Kaufman suggests:

The proper question for a contemporary christology, therefore, is: not how has Jesus been regarded by this or that supposedly authoritative tradition... but rather: what criteria should we use in deciding how to regard and interpret Jesus ?95

This then requires a modifying of traditional views to reconstruct them in a more egalitarian manner. This would presumably involve emphasizing elements of Christ's character and nature over his "maleness", and his relationship as child of God over his
"sonness". Kaufman suggests that this may be facilitated by stressing the historic aspects of Jesus over the mythic. There are many different interpretations of what Jesus was and what he represented. In this instance Kaufman sees the bible as important as "...indispensable foundation for Christian reflection of Jesus." For example, through its description of Jesus' relation to God we are enabled in our study of who God is.

While Jesus may be perceived by Kaufman as a suitable symbol he offers only a vague defence for the suitability or authenticity of such a symbol. The primary criteria which he suggests is "humaneness". While minimizing the significance with respect to reality and ultimacy and cultural God constructs, Kaufman does assert that it is important to emphasize those aspects of our ultimacy constructs which "fulfill us as specifically human." For Kaufman, Jesus is an available referent in a way that God isn't, upon which we can model ourselves in striving toward greater fulfillment as humans.

I would suggest however, that "Jesus as paradigm for humaneness" is a construct appropriated by Kaufman largely because of his own socio-cultural background, and as such must be acknowledged, as his own personal God-construct. As a Mennonite, Kaufman is preoccupied with issues such as non-resistance and its defence historically, scripturally and in today's nuclear world. Jesus has traditionally been a relatively
problem-free paradigm for Mennonite theologians. However, there is no escaping the fact that it is to some degree based on a subjective interpretation and elevation of available information about Jesus, as well as the exclusion of problematic Old Testament historical narrative and/or myth, not to mention the hazard of completely disassociating Christ from God.

Kaufman's position with respect to "God" is clarified somewhat in an outline he provides of what he perceives to be two dominant motifs of "Godness" which are common in Western culture.

God has been a centre of devotion and service which could draw selves and communities out of themselves...opening up human life to structures of order and meaning otherwise outside its reach.

"God" and the "kingdom of God" signified, thus, a movement through history from a past of sin and bondage to a future of judgment and salvation, and it was in terms of that great historical movement that the image/concept of God actually exercised its power, both through the terror it evoked and the love it inspired. The fulfillment of human life...or its absolute destruction - was in God's hands: it was this awareness that was the real ground of God's power to draw human existence outside itself.98

It has always been difficult to maintain a balance between these two elementary motifs. However, Kaufman, again speaking from the context of his tradition, sees Christ as the unifying factor providing a reference point for a normative understanding of Christ and God. Christ is the paradigm upon which we are able to develop conceptions of humaneness.

When one proceeds in this way, such qualities as love, mercy, and forgiveness - even "nonresistance" (Matt. 5:39) or "weakness" (1 Cor. 1:25) in the face of aggression - will be given prominence in the conception of the truly human and in the understanding of God.99
A concept of God of this sort would not be grounded on the supposed authority of revelation but rather on the grounds of its humaneness and appropriateness. What he has in effect been doing (and this is something of an understatement) is questioning the "...frame of orientation centred on and symbolized by God."100 "Does or can devotion to this God in fact provide us with significant and valid orientation in the 'real world'?"101 If it does, then it must have some correspondence to how things are and must represent something "real". That is, the symbol "God" must represent something metaphysically real in the world.

Speaking of God as "real" in this way "...expresses symbolically this conviction that free and loving persons-in-community have a substantial metaphysical foundation, that there are cosmic forces working toward this sort of humanization."102 Kaufman asserts that if the concept of God can be sufficiently demythologized and properly re-constructed it can be effective in helping humanity to focus on the development of a more humane society. In this way, God can become a "religioulsy significant symbol" within contemporary culture.

With this move the tension between the mythic and the metaphysical is somewhat reduced by qualifying both God's "aboluteness" and God's "humaneness". God's absoluteness is qualified by identifying the referent of "God" with those specific cosmic forces that undergird our distinctively human forms of being; God's humaneness is qualified by interpreting God as a symbol for humanizing and vital powers instead of as "a personal being".103

For Kaufman, a softening or blending of these two motifs results in a symbol/construct which is characterized both by "metaphysical plausibility and some religious power".
Kaufman has outlined his imaginative constructs which address his ultimacy questions, however they hardly provide a universal model for God-construction which others might easily appropriate. While Kaufman has been anxious to expose the foundations of theology and provide a new model for God-construction, he has not been able to avoid some of the subjectivist trappings which he critiques. In part, this is due to Kaufman's failure, as a theologian, to commit himself to belief in a real God.

Having classified faith as "religious work" which is distinct from theological work, Kaufman is unable to commit himself, in faith (within his theological system) to a real God. While this may be the case with Kaufman's work as a theologian, it may not be so with his life as a believer. It almost seems as if Kaufman is able to divide his life; expressing commitment to a real God in his life as a believer and non-commitment to a real God in his life as a theologian.

As Ottati writes regarding the focus on the normative humanity of Christ:

....the resultant criterion of humanization is vague, and it threatens a situationist ethic in which one tries to discern the loving or humanizing possibility for action in different historical circumstances. One looks in vain for additional moral norms which might be formed by continuities in experience, agency, or a perduring moral order, to say nothing of continuities in God's bearing on the world.\textsuperscript{104}

In the book \textit{God the Problem}, Kaufman puts forward his theory of the "available God". The "available God" is an
immediate referent that allows us to use the word "God". It is essentially an "imaginative construct" that we are able to utilize for practical purposes.

Whatever knowledge we claim to have of him, it will be mediated through, and never go beyond, the imaginative construct that is our available God. The "real God" must always remain a transcendent unknown, a mere point of reference.

The "available God"/"real God" distinction has promise but as presented by Kaufman is not sufficient for answering questions regarding God's existence or presence. This is largely because in the context in which Kaufman is speaking there is no actual faith in a real (however remote and distant) God. I believe that what Kaufman has proposed presents itself as a platitude, to satisfy non-academic, emotional needs for a God.

For Kaufman as theologian, whether or not God really exists is a nonquestion. Don Wiebe in "On Kaufman's Problem God" writes that this concept of God is "indistinguishable from delusion".

...the 'available God' symbolized, throws no light on the issue of the 'real' referent of 'God'. That must always remain beyond us. Thus we have not escaped from the subjectivist trap - there is no escape from it - but we can now understand it better.

Kaufman's position is that the inconceivable real God "would" be beyond our capacity to conceptualize. In an article on Kaufman's theological method, Kevin Sharpe has suggested:

We need to face the problem of the relationship between theological language and the chief referent of such language, namely God. But we need to do this without accepting Kaufman's suggestion that the actual reality God (the real God) is utterly beyond all language and description.
One corrective to Kaufman's position would be to introduce the locating of God's presence and dimension of Godself, within creation. Creation may be seen as a symbol for a real God. Imaginative construction of God concepts is an activity which occurs within the context of a faith commitment to a real God; both imagination and construction are components of the process of coming to know and understand God better. The existence of representations of God within creation may be described as revelation. Needless to say, this revelation is experienced in many different ways, and thus understandings of God vary between persons, churches, denominations and cultures. As Olthuis writes:

Moreover, although from the structure of cognitive knowing it is demonstrable that an ultimate horizon with its ultimate is necessary, such demonstration falls short of establishing who or what the ultimate is. In fact, as does happen, the ultimate could be No-thing, ultimate meaninglessness. None of this makes the knowledge of the ultimate any less real in the experience of the knower. It does point to the unique nature of such knowledge: this knowledge is revelation accepted in the surrender of faith.109

In his hermeneutic, Olthuis clearly addresses what I believe to be two critical problems for Kaufman. The first concerns his lack of emphasis on the significance of faith with respect to imaginatively perceiving God. This may have contributed to the second difficulty, which is his too easy dismissal of revelational experience from and of God.

A substantial proof for the significance of faith and revelational experience is the evidence of tradition. In The Meaning and End of Religion, Wilfred Cantwell-Smith writes of expressions of faith throughout history which constitute the various religious traditions.
It is a dialectical process between the mundane and the transcendent, a process whose locus is the personal faith and the lives of men and women, not altogether observable and not to be confined within any intelligible limits. It is a process of which the mundane, overt results are available for scrutiny by the historian, in the ever expanding deposit of what I have called an accumulating tradition. What the nonovert and perhaps even nonmundane results of this process are to be in the faith of those persons who subsequently confront or participate in the tradition, is up to them to say. Or it is for the later historians to infer from the new contribution that, out of the faith, they then may make to the ongoing development. ¹¹⁰

Faithing, as a function of our very living is an activity qualified by imaginative construction. It is a response to life experience and whatever degree of folklorish, religious tradition one may be exposed to, that tradition and reception of it, forming a part of the foundation upon which faith risks. Imaginative construction of God concepts from tradition alone is impossible without acknowledged and professed faith in those traditions as valid for life.

Quoting Olthuis:

...as we commit ourselves to the ultimate, the ultimate functions for us as its own evidence for ultimacy...The ultimate cannot be proven. If it is, it contradicts its own intention to be final.

...our faith leads our cognitive knowing. At the same time, our cognitive knowing provides the foundational structure by laying out the possibilities for faith. ¹¹¹
D. Imaginative Construction v. Description

In an article entitled "Revelation and Imaginative Construction", Ronald Thiemann critiques Kaufman's efforts to establish imagination as foundational in theology. He believes that Kaufman finds a dichotomy between imaginative construction and description, which is essentially a false dichotomy. He summarizes Kaufman's argument in the following way: When revelation is perceived as the foundation for theology, description is the foremost intellectual effort. However, when imagination is seen as foundational, construction is the primary theological occupation. Thiemann argues that his distinction [Kaufman's] between description and construction stems from an argument regarding "the logical uniqueness of the concept 'God'".\textsuperscript{112} The crux of the argument is that other disciplines have concepts which correspond to percepts and may therefore be described as descriptive. However, theology which does not have corresponding concepts is purely constructive. The revelation model therefore with its use of descriptive terms of God is invalid for theological purposes.

Thiemann feels that Kaufman has underestimated the imaginative character of all human conceptualizing.

Once it is recognized that all concept formation is the result of imaginative construction, then his attempt to distinguish theological concepts from concepts of ordinary objects by an appeal to the imaginative character of the former collapses.\textsuperscript{113}
Thiemann prefers to find a compromise between revelation and imagination:

...one cannot dismiss a descriptive or referential use of theological concepts simply by stressing theology's imaginative character. When the dichotomy between construction and description has been softened, then the further possibility that imagination and revelation are not opposing or competing foundations must also be examined. ¹¹⁴

He sees imagination and revelation as both having a role in guiding theological reflection.

While not compromising his position regarding revelation, Kaufman counters several of the difficulties raised by those critics reacting to his *An Essay on Theological Method*. In *The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God*, he placed imaginative construction of God concepts more within a historic theological tradition. He also emphasizes the idea of God as an ultimate imaginative construct, allowing for the imaginative character of any human construct. With this in mind, revelation itself as recorded experience throughout history is an imaginative construct, "constructing toward God". Kaufman's goal is to continue that movement, within our contemporary situation rather than relying on previous historic constructs as solely authoritative.

Responding to the why God(?) problem, Kaufman describes the historical situation out of which the "individual" or "person" "God" has arisen. Because God is not "seen" it has been a mistake to consider those attributes accorded to God as features of a particular being.
As the principal character in a great dramatic story God is conceived as absolute, all-powerful, all-knowing, holy and the like—this character, then, often lifted out of the original story—context which gave it life and meaning, becomes the core of the notion of God; and all of life and the world are grasped as ultimately grounded upon and centred in this God.\textsuperscript{115}

Kaufman agrees that undeniably God became the ultimate reference point from which everything else could be understood. However, he contends that the basis of this ultimate reference point was a historically developed "technical theological vocabulary". This vocabulary does not refer to a directly perceived object or reality, but:

...function rather as the building blocks or reference points which articulate the theistic world-picture or vision of life. For this reason it is a mistake to take over traditional vocabulary and methods uncritically, since these were worked out largely on the assumption that God-language was directly objectivist or referential, and thus they are usually cast in a reifying mode.\textsuperscript{116}

Everything then becomes understood in terms of God—in terms that is; of God terminology. The conclusion that Kaufman arrives at is that "theology is not working from an authoritative divine revelation."\textsuperscript{117}

E. Exploring the False Dichotomy Between Imagination and Revelation

It is interesting to note some of the problems in Kaufman's earlier thought that may have led to this more recent position. For example, Kaufman was never entirely
comfortable with the "unscientific" and somewhat "tenuous" character of revelation. He believed that as a measure or judge of realities which we encountered, revelation was a difficult "thing" to "prove". Essentially, revelation was a body of presupposition which we offered as proof of our view of reality, and it thus became the basis for ascertaining truth. He chose to understand revelation as disclosure of an otherworldly agent over against human subject. However, characteristic of this model was a too passive subject who experienced the world as per revelation dictated. There was little of the dynamic of a "discovery" process involving human initiative and involvement.

Kaufman's perception of the subjects passive role in relation to revelation may be the key to his complete dismissal of revelation. In fact, so anxious has Kaufman been to compensate for this one-dimensional view of human activity, he has overcompensated to the opposite extreme. As Garrett Green comments:

By conceiving imagination only under the metaphor of construction, he misses the fact that imagination has a passive as well as an active moment, that it not only shapes reality but is also shaped by it.

While the constructive character of imagination is undeniably significant, the receptive side is equally critical to our understanding and concept formation. However, concomitant with acknowledgment of this receptive dimension is a commitment to accepting the reality of God's existence. To further
develop the systematics of this position, two further commitments must be asserted, namely: the significance of faith in a belief in the reality of God, and a belief that as beings created in the image of that God, we in some way reflect God's glory and image. This may be described as more than resemblance, rather, a receptivity to communication from God, in a word, revelation.

Kaufman's difficulties with revelation may be matters more of definition than significant theological polarity of positions. Kaufman at one time defined revelation as: "...the mode through which one's god is given him," something which he perceived as distinguished from "ordinary experiential and cognitive processes". It is from this starting point of a rather lofty view of revelation, a view that in many respects alienates human, created beings further from God, as well as from each other that Kaufman eventually chose to abandon a theologial schema which accommodated revelation.122

I believe that it would be more constructive to Kaufman's position to perceive of revelation as many different forms of experience and communication. For example, God may reveal Godself through creation in its various forms, such as that which we call nature, or through relationships with and experiences of other persons. God may also choose to reveal Godself through music or other artistic expressions. The
point being that God (if we are acknowledging a God) should not be limited with respect to how he may communicate to creation. Kaufman's initial understanding of revelation limited God as well as humankind. While I affirm his abandoning that definition of revelation, I maintain that it was not necessary to abandon a position accommodating of revelation: a reworking of his definition would have provided a more comprehensive presentation of his work regarding imagination. Quoting Rahner:

Revelation, then, should not be understood as an insertion of fully articulated divine truths into the continuum of human knowledge, but rather as the process by which God, working within history and human tradition, enables his spiritual creatures to achieve a higher level of consciousness.¹²³

A definition such as that quoted above nicely incorporates imaginatively constructive conceptualizing of God concepts. Imagination becomes part of the "given" process whereby humans develop increased consciousness of God, one another, and the world in which they live. Instead of giving imagination certitudinal status (as Kaufman appears to) imagination is involved in the process of determining and developing our interpretive framework. In many respects it serves a mediating function between sense experience (some of which may be described as primordially revelational) and philosophical or worldview position.

While evaluating Olthuis' "On Worldview" article, Harry Fernhout describes the significance of faith in this process:
In Olthuis' approach as well as in Neibuhr's, then, the human experience of a sense of 'ought' or prescriptivity is rooted in faith as it comes to expression in a worldview or interpretive framework. Faith is commitment, and the commitment of faith calls for loyalty in orienting life in line with the commitment. When faith is expressed in a worldview, the loyalty dimension of faith calls forth a sense of 'ought' in one's view of things. In faith we experience an impetus to bring about conformity between our vision and what we do. Faith calls us to act toward our vision. Our worldview or interpretive framework is thus an indicative, but also embodies an imperative. 

Imagination, then may be seen to be passively receptive, and actively constructing; essentially neither aspect being possible without the other, as together they operate out of our way of being in the world and being in relationship with God. Imagination can also be understood as part of the dynamic which continually works to make the different forms of revelation real in our lives. A theology endorsing active imaginative construction of God concepts thus need not negate a revelational foundation for that theology.

The function of revelation is to provide us with images by which to see truthfully and realistically. Revelation is not impersonal, however. Nothing is revealed when the images remain objects, part of an external cultural heritage. Revelation is the conversion of the imagination and takes place only when the revelatory images become ingrained in the psyche and provide the framework for all our seeing and living.

The significance of revelation is directly proportionate to its efficacy for life, and this becomes the special task of imagination, to assist in working revelation out in the world.
IV. ACCOMODATING IMAGINATIVE CONSTRUCTION

A. The Mode - Imagination

Having explored in some detail the two primary stages in the development of Kaufman's theological method, specifically, revelational theology and imaginative non-revelational theology, there is a potential third stage within his work which requires some attention. This third stage would involve a merging of his two previous positions to arrive at an imaginatively constructive revelational theology.

While this third stage may never be adopted by Kaufman, I view it as a positive by-product of his writings respecting imagination's role in theological work. However, in contrast to Kaufman, I see theological work as indistinct from religious faith, with imagination very much a mode of communication and understanding within this process of experiencing God. Religious faith commitments guide and influence theological work, enhanced by the gift of imagination; a gift which enables fuller knowing and understanding of God.

As gift, imagination is a functioning dimension of ourselves as God's creatures. It fulfills many different roles within the broader categories of conceptualizing, knowing, understanding and experiencing. In this chapter I wish to explore some of the functions and characteristics of imagination as well as its relationship to faith and revelation, particularly
with a view to establishing its integrality to revelational theology.

Calvin Seerveld describes imagination as "the aesthetic aspect of God's creatures", and while it is true that aesthetic functioning and expression is a dimension of imagination, too often the aesthetic itself, is perceived as lacking intellectual substance and meaning for life, similarly with imagination. Mary Warnock in an article entitled "Imagination - Aesthetic and Religious" suggests that it is through imagination that we are able to make connections, differentiate between things and determine their significance. She sees no distinction between what is traditionally understood to be aesthetic imagination and the "regular" imagination of daily life, or of religious concerns.

The imagination, then, ranges from the very ordinary, by which we see a tree as a tree, and not a vague mess of shapes and colours, by which we hear a series of sounds as a melody, to the most exalted, by which people can formulate and pass on to others, though perhaps not by the use of literal words, the vision or understanding they have.

The imagination is a part of the everyday functioning of the human mind responding from emotion and/or intellect to stimuli. Similarly, Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason established imagination as a mediating function between sense perception and thought conceptualization. Imagination makes possible knowledge of the world.

Warnock describes Christianity as evolving from a story:
For in the story it is the aesthetic imagination which is at work; and as the story is repeated, or read again and again, it becomes an institution, its reading a ritual, its words almost a liturgy.\textsuperscript{129}

When we "do theology" or Christology we use our imagination to improve on, or better articulate the story, but also, as John Beer suggests...to make those subtle adjustments, both conscious and unconscious, to the boundaries of our Christology which we have inherited from those who in their generation used their imagination in a similar way."\textsuperscript{130}

Beer finds this activity comprises what he views as the two dimensions of imagination. The first dimension being one of fantasy, illusion, experiencing an escape from reality or images different in some way from what is present in the real world. The second dimension reiterates Kant's thesis and Warnock's proposal; an element of perception which seeks to impose unity upon things perceived in the phenomenological world. In her book \textit{Imagination}, Warnock quotes Kant on this point as follows:

What is first given to us is appearance. When combined with consciousness it is called perception. Now since every appearance contains a manifold, and since different perceptions therefore occur in the mind separately and singly, a combination of them such as they cannot have in sense is demanded. There must therefore exist in us an active faculty for the synthesis of this manifold. To this faculty I give the name Imagination.\textsuperscript{131}

Imagination thus acts within an historical context gathering sensory data and perceptions, storing them, using them and developing constructs from them. Kaufman sees imagination acting very much in an historic sense as well, as has been
...a human [imaginative] construct like all other concepts, is, and always has been, built up through an extrapolation or development of certain finite metaphors or models, in such a way that it can serve as the ultimate point of reference for grasping and understanding all of experience, life and the world.\(^\text{132}\)

Imaginative constructs are never arrived at within a single moment of time, but are rather, formulations which represent evolved ways of seeing and being in the world.

Michael Barnes elaborates on this aspect of the study of imagination, suggesting that there are three stages or levels involved in imagination. The first stage is represented by the raw material of words and images which the imagination creates and makes use of. The second aspect is the human imaginative capacity itself, the very ability to apprehend reality and translate it into specific images. The final stage is the historic dimension or "imaginative framework" from which imagination gathers its specific images and the reference point for those images.\(^\text{133}\)

While Kaufman's assessment of imagination would be in harmony with Barnes' respecting the above outline, Barnes also is careful to point out that while imagination is a given of our experience and our life skill tools, it must also be subject to some restraints. For example:

The scientist has to fantasize and wool-gather and playfully toss images about; but he or she must eventually choose among the images on the basis of critical criteria.\(^\text{134}\)
There are no *pure facts* which we can know, because any *facts* are always a product of our mind's way of knowing or understanding. We cannot fully, objectively know anything in an ultimate sense, particularly since the imagination is always involved in the understanding process as well. However, Barnes, using science again as an example writes:

But as best as possible science submits its marvelously ingenious imaginings to the only test for truth that we know in the long run - how well they fit our best estimate so far of what the available relevant data is.¹³⁵

Kaufman, also acknowledging that there are no available *pure facts* sees one's God constructs' appropriateness to life, their ability to enable humaneness as their test for truth.¹³⁶ This is however, too vague a criteria to serve as a critical standard for religion with respect to religious imaginings. I am not denying that it is a well-intentioned standard, but challenge its lack of commitment to *niak* a stab at ultimacy, or, in other words a "leap of faith" or a Ricoeurian "wager". If our imaginative God constructs do not refer to anything we are willing to claim as ultimate and real they are vacuous and shallow.

In describing the wager of hermeneutics Ricoeur writes:

Does that mean that we could go back to a primitive naïveté? Not at all. In every way, something has been lost, irremediably lost: immediacy of belief. But if we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the ritual belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naïveté in and through criticism. In short, it is by interpreting that we can hear again....The circle can be stated bluntly: "We must understand in order to believe, but we must believe in order to understand."¹³⁷
Reasonably, we must agree that reason leads us to acknowledge that we must have faith, and without faith we cannot fully use or develop reason. This may be best expressed as experience of limitation. We experience limit situations which are barriers or ultimate limits to and of our experience. One such limit experience being death, wherein we experience our limitedness in relation to something beyond, and in some situations, to the unlimited.¹³⁸

In *Models of God*, Sallie McFague states that there is an assumption "that there is a reality to which our constructions refer, even though the only way we have of reaching it is by creating versions of it."¹³⁹ Kaufman articulates no such assumption. Without clearly stating his position with respect to this ultimate reality, Kaufman fails to take it seriously, and in effect, undermines the original presuppositions of the framework of imaginative construction which he exalts. Imaginative constructions occurring over time, within historical context, and the pre-existing frameworks to which they make reference must be based on some commitment in faith to a real God or real ultimate reality of whatever nature or form it might take. His work is significant in its exposition of imaginative construction and its contribution to belief systems, as well as the integral role of frameworks of imaginative constructing, however, to rely on these certitudinally is as stated previously, insufficient. As James Mark writes in the introduction to Warnock's article: "Imagination - Aesthetic & Religious":

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Imagination...can help us to see what otherwise we should not see; to make connections which would otherwise be missing; to go on further than reason and knowledge can take us. But the question of truth remains. Where the relevant experience is so various, so mixed and so hard to define; where nothing can be demonstrated; where no one has the last word, how are we to make good the claim that it expresses truth, not merely our feelings?

Garrett Green perceives of imagination as paradigmatic, fulfilling a role of translating "complex aspects of life" into paradigmatic images which are more easily grasped and used. I believe that Kaufman's position would be greatly enhanced by the adoption of this more reasonable "limit to" functioning for imagination.

Green outlines several functions of the paradigmatic imagination:

(a) The paradigm aids in focusing on what is most significant from amongst an enormous range of experience;

(b) The paradigm is able to condense and represent more complex realities;

(c) The paradigmatic imagination provides a catalyst for more "discoveries";

(d) The paradigm creates and sustains communities of similarly minded individuals, i.e. those who share commitment to a particular way of seeing, or a particular paradigm.
As Green writes:

An important aspect of the conceptual grammar of the paradigm is its claim to elucidate a wider reality, its essential relation to something beyond itself. A paradigm is not a self-enclosed language game but rather an analogical image for understanding something else.142

I believe imagination functions thus in a mediating capacity between truth and understanding, assisting faithing in its solidifying truth experience, and making relevant, truth commitments. Without imaginatively constructive activity faith would be stagnant and lacking efficacy. Without faith, imagination lacks substance and significant purpose. This dynamic of faith and imagination working together with respect to God construction will be explored in more detail in the next section.

By focusing almost exclusively on the constructive activity of imagination, Kaufman neglects its mediating capabilities as well as imagination's strong connections to and interdependency on other aspects or modes of being. As Philip Keane suggests imagination relates to: "...our senses, our emotions, our will and our social context, as well as with different levels in our intelligence."143

Imagination draws on all human thought processes, not simply, what is often actually the quite surface rationality of logical thought. Emotional response, intuitive perception, and practical motivation are all rational processes though usually involving different types of rationality than what are
...the act of abstracting intellectual data from our imagination is a process involving the agent intellect and therefore involving human insight and creativity...the agent intellect functions on the basis of...an excess or openness toward being, toward God. Such an approach makes the activity of imagination in offering us data for reflection and our process of reflection on imagination to be a much more dynamic process. This process opens up the whole question of mystical and intuitive knowledge. Imaginatively, we can be open to experiences of faith and trust in God, experiences that would not be possible at the level of systematic philosophical or theological discourse.\textsuperscript{145}

Respecting the above position, I would venture to say that imagination has a freedom from many of the constraints of academia which enables it to go deeper and further in its exploration and articulation of truth concepts.\textsuperscript{146} Part of the reason for this freedom is that while it has been seen as a largely non-academic exercise, it has thus not been subject to academic criteria. Regrettably, Kaufman's attempts to validate imaginative construction suffer from Kaufman's own restraints, causing his presentation and the constructs themselves to lack imagination. Kaufman's constraints are in effect his fears to let imagination roam too far in the direction of exploration of faith commitment to the constructs, or, seeking a source for visions for life. "In its play, imagination looks for deeper and more appropriate unities in our experience, unities and insights into truth which we might easily miss without imagination."\textsuperscript{147} Kaufman's exmpiricism suffocates the imaginative potential he lets loose.
Imagination is a playful, spirited mode that:

In the sense in which it can give us insight into
the nature of things...is the source not merely of
passing pleasures or frissons (though it is the
source of these as well) but of truth.148

B. Surrender, Revelation and Imaginative Construction

Wilfred Cantwell-Smith asserts that the life of the
religious person (and I would maintain that all persons are
religious) comprises two worlds; the world of human life and
another world which transcends this one. Understanding the
relation between these two worlds is one of life's great
queries. However, Cantwell-Smith sees the relation between the
two as being, quite simply, humankind. In looking in particular
at the history of religion one is able to note persons involve­
ment in specific and observable activities, as well as in something
that is obviously present as a factor, but is not easily observed
or documented. Cantwell-Smith distinguishes between these
two facets of religious history as "cumulative tradition" and
"faith", again, with the link between the two of them being
humankind. He suggests that:

Faith is nourished and patterned by the tradition,
is formed and in some sense sustained by it - yet
faith precedes and transcends the tradition and
in turn sustains it.149

The dynamic of personal faith within religious tradition, provides
life to what would otherwise become just dogma or ritual. However,
in turn, faith relies upon tradition, which is a part of the context
of life, to nurture it and contribute to its growth.

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Having recognized the relationship between faith and religious tradition, it may be helpful to focus more on faith itself, and explore in more detail, what exactly faith is (or at least come as near to a definition as may be possible). Faith has been an important theme in Paul Tillich's work and he describes faith as "ultimate concern". For Tillich, faith develops from experiences which we perceive as having ultimate value and to which subsequently we accord ultimate loyalty or commitment. Faith as ultimate concern demands complete surrender of the individual. It requires a response of the whole person, involving feeling and reason, and in return contributes to a sense of unity and direction. Simply put, faith (for Tillich) is the state of being ultimately concerned. In claiming ultimacy, a concern makes the promise of total fulfillment, in exchange for total surrender. This promise of total fulfillment, or as Tillich also describes it - ultimate fulfillment is accepted through an act of faith.150

Tillich perceives of faith as an act of the total personality including all elements of personal life. Faith does not operate as an independent function of humankind but exists inter-dependently with other modes. Tillich discusses this point at some length in an essay entitled "Religion as a Dimension in Man's Spiritual Life." In summary, he writes:

When we say that religion is an aspect of the human spirit, we are saying that if we look at the human spirit from a special point of view it presents itself to us as religious...It is the point of view from which we can look into the depth
of man's spiritual life. Religion is not a special function of man's spiritual life, but it is the dimension of depth in all of its functions.151

In explaining the metaphor "depth" Tillich writes that it signifies that the religious or faith aspect points to that which is ultimate, infinite, and unconditional in the spiritual life of persons. "Religion in the largest and most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern. And ultimate concern is manifest in all creative functions of the human spirit."152 Tillich perceives of life as a unity which does not contain levels but dimensions. The spiritual dimension of life essentially regulates humankind's concept and experience with the world and is in this respect the source of life's functioning. Faith is also the provider of unity to life. Ultimate concern then, is very much that which lies behind the modal functions as a unity sufficing as religious direction or "seeking" for humankind.153

I have drawn on the example of Tillich in particular because of his influence on Kaufman's work, particularly with respect to understanding faith or ultimacy commitments. Kaufman is similarly interested in the results of ultimacy commitments, respecting what they have to offer life, and this contribution to life's unity and purpose supplants the importance of the specific character or nature of the guiding and ultimate concern. Both paint theological pictures with broader strokes than simply outlining a concept of God. In fact, both seem very reluctant to commit themselves to any specifics regarding
in actual practice the image/concept of God does not function simply as referring to some being which is grasped and understood just in terms of itself; on the contrary, it functions as the principal focal point of an overall world-picture, and it is in terms of that interpretive frame that it must be understood.154

For both theologians, then, this interest in the ultimate is a potentiality within humankind which develops within historical process providing a context for understanding and finding meaning in life.

The most significant difference between Kaufman and Tillich's position is their perception of the importance of faith. Despite the fact that he may not be concerned with the particular focus of faith, believing that God is being itself, Tillich is nevertheless consistent in his estimation of faith as an extremely influential factor in one's life. Kaufman clearly elevates imaginative construction to that status. He would prefer to speak of "the elaborate synthesizing powers of the mind"155 or of "mythic imagination"156 as key in worldview formation and influence. Concerning his placing of faith outside of his theological framework, Kaufman writes:

It is in response to meaning already abroad in the culture and language, meaning given in and through the symbol "God," that theological criticism and construction arises. (In this sense theology always begins in "faith" and in response to "revelation," and is always in the service of faith.)157
Recognition of the established symbol "God" is empirical and distinct from faith commitment, further reiterating Kaufman's separation of faith and theology. The work of theology then becomes recognizing the inadequacies of the forms which are mediating meaning (about God) and reconstructing them to re-make the symbol more effective for human life.

While Kaufman is correct, I think in stressing the evaluation of mediating forms to warrant their relativity to contemporary life, there must be a point at which we acknowledge the contributing factor of faith commitment to the symbol and the resultant mediating forms. Avery Dulles, writing about adherence to doctrine, cautions against relying solely on dogma as demonstrative of faith commitment. He suggests that: "Authentic religion is deformed when faith is misconstrued as 'an intellectual adherence to an historical testimony or to a doctrinal formula'." 158 I believe this is precisely the kind of role Kaufman believes faith has played in the lives of most "believers". It may well reflect his own personal understanding or experience of faith and thus he (rightly) seeks to correct it. However, as appears to be a pattern within Kaufman's work, he chooses either to abandon it, or to ignore it. I believe that in this case, Kaufman simply chooses to ignore the positive and essential activity of faith, and places faith outside his theological system under the category of "various and miscellaneous presuppositions".
I would suggest that the key word Tillich uses to describe faith, or ultimate concern is surrender - a giving up of, a responding of the whole person, involving feeling and reason. The dynamic of surrender is that it occurs in response to God's revelation and in turn, the act of surrendering itself, opens up further experience of God, thereby deepening faith. As James Olthuis writes:

For Christians, faith is an entrusting of self to God in which we receive certainty, connection and ground for our existence, an entrusting in which we meet God in ourselves and in creation even as God meets us. 159

Faithing never occurs in a vacuum but is always elicited by some "reminder of God", some moment or sign of God's presence, existence or activity as Creator. Olthuis suggests that: "Every thinker necessarily begins with some faith intuition received as revelation:"160 This capacity of faith intuition may be described as revelatory, as gift, call, or as an inherent capability of humankind to connect with the Creator, with the ultimate. I would suggest that these terms: revelatory, gift, call and inherent capability are synonymous and in that respect are demonstrative of God's method of revealing Godself to us. God's Spirit gives us discerning to respond to, and understand God's calling and word for all of life and creation. It is a fluid process of movement from and to God. A more detailed discussion of this movement with respect to calls will be presented in the next section.

Imaginative activity occurs somewhere between and/or amongst revelation and surrender. Ray L. Hart suggests that:
...imagination is an ontic/ontological power, participating in the very being of what it opens up and upon. Imagination is engaged by those dimensions of being which lay a claim upon man's creativity, which require human response for the maturation of their and his act of being.¹⁶¹

This is the point at which Kaufman's imaginative construction fits in best and where it is most needed. Rather than insisting on attributing imaginative construction exclusively to human ability, as Kaufman does, it is best understood as a part of the gift, calling, revelation, and human capability flux.

Revelatory images give glimpses into a world of incredible richness and meaning. These encounters open up understanding of the ultimate and reciprocally, increase understanding of the world. Imagination aids faith by broadening thinking beyond experienced limitations to imagined potentialities. Craig Dykstra outlines his criteria for imagination's successful contribution to religious consciousness.

First if our imaginations are really to bring us in closer touch with reality, they must be informed by adequate and truthful images. Secondly, Christians believe that what is revealed in their book and in their history provides adequate and truthful images. They have to be appropriated in each Christian's life, of course, and they have to be brought to bear in new ways through the complex processes of the active imaginations of contemporary individuals.¹⁶²

Imagination is one way of concretizing abstract thoughts about God which stem from our faith commitment to God. This imaginative world reflects both our new experiences and imaginative constructs of God which may occur from day to day, and the influence of past images which are a part of the history of our religious tradition.
Revelation must be understood not to represent specific images, but to be expressed as knowledge, or experience of some sort. Revelatory experience occurs within the context of "regular" life and is confirmed by faith. Faith is a confidence in, or risking to accept the experience as revelatory and disclosive. There is also, a prior or existing degree of faith which is surrendered to a particular object of worship and belief which influences the revelatory experience. Revelation and faith are as Dulles describes: "reciprocally prior to each other."

On the one hand, revelation precedes faith inasmuch as, before anyone can believe, there must be symbols wherein God expresses what he is, and wills to be, for the world. These symbols, before their meaning is understood and accepted, are virtual revelation. When believers accept revelation, they allow their minds to be determined by the meaning they find in the symbols. Thus revelation shapes their faith. Conversely, faith precedes revelation, in that symbols are without meaning unless, perceived by those already predisposed to that truth, or at least seeking after truth. Implicit in the seeking itself is a faith that the search is necessary and will be productive, because God's revelation is available for discovery and reception.

The activities of surrendering in faith to an ultimacy commitment, receptivity to revelation, and in faith imaginatively constructing God concepts are essentially the stages of worldview formation.

In the commitment of faith, basic beliefs are received as revelation. These basic beliefs
of faith, organized and fit together in a worldview, provide us with ways of seeing things and of structuring our experience which are prior to any conceptualization of it.\textsuperscript{164}

A worldview, as discussed earlier in this paper, is the resulting organization of basic beliefs, or frame of reference for life. A worldview based on revelation received in faith, and surrender to a belief and faith in God is extremely solid in foundation. More solid, it may be argued than a worldview which is based merely on its own awareness of its presuppositions, its ability to evaluate those presuppositions, and its proficiency at imaginative construction. Unfortunately, without the starting point of faith and receipt of revelation, this is where we must place Kaufman's worldview model. Religious imagination offers its greatest contribution only when it is seen as part of a broader process of human understanding. This is the process of faith responding to and receiving revelation and evaluating and modifying its God concepts, to live out more effectively, a life dedicated to the primary faith commitment.

C. Responding to Common Calls

In keeping with Kaufman's de-emphasizing faith commitment to God, he is also reluctant to speak of humankind as "created". In fact, Kaufman's stressing of the constructive activity of imagination tends at times to lean toward a position
that posits a confusing degree of self-creation. According to Kaufman, we have created our theologies autonomously as collective, cultural beings, and are in a position to initiate whatever changes to our worldview framework we feel might make it more suitable. There is little in Kaufman's theology that addresses the calls in and of creation through which we experience and understand God. It is an interesting dialectic in Kaufman's work, because, while he creatively explores the more autonomous side of humankind as discussed in Chapter II of this paper, I would suggest that some balance is required in considering the phenomena of receiving and responding to God's calls in creation.

There is some history to Kaufman's difficulties with this theme in his most recent work, and it may be traced back (at least) to his book *God the Problem*. In *God the Problem*, Kaufman abandons the premise that God acts in specific events in any particular way. The most obvious problem this presents relates to God's creating a new order for life through the events of the birth and death of Christ. As Thomas F. Tracy argues:

> If we cannot say that God acts with particular purposes in specific historical events, then we cannot speak of Jesus Christ as that individual life in which God establishes a new relationship with fallen humanity. Rather, the significance of Jesus Christ must consist in the vivid way his life makes manifest a universal truth about God and man.165

This however, is precisely what Kaufman appears content to do; viewing Christ primarily as a model for humankind of effective humaneness.
What Kaufman tries to do is to move from speaking of God acting within history to presenting a theory of God's enacting history. His methodology distinguishes between "master-acts" which reflect the agent's long-term intention and "sub-acts" which are more minor, individual acts, precipitating the longer-term acts. Nature and history would fall under the heading of master-acts, reflecting actions of a being beyond the world. When we speak of God's acts in a historic sense we should understand the "...whole complicated and intricate teleological movement of all of nature and history should be regarded as a single all-encompassing act of God..." God's action then represents the direction which is taken by history in its entirety.

Kaufman would seem to suggest then that God has set everything going at the beginning and can't or won't intervene. While acknowledging this position, Kaufman qualifies it by asserting that the fundamental structures of nature and history as grounded in God's act, develop in time. "An act is intrinsically temporal: it is the ordering of a succession of events toward an end." He compares this movement to the process of evolutionary development and finds God's achieving God's ultimate purpose with this single act consistent with evolutionary theory. However, he is not consistent with this position, respecting the single act and may be somewhat uncomfortable with it. He suggests that there are certain acts which play obvious roles in helping the natural-historical process along.
Kaufman defines subacts as: "... only those events which move the creation forward a further step toward the realization of God's purposes..." He describes many natural processes as "fundamental rhythms" which support more complex processes and contribute to the structure of the world. These are not "new acts of God" and thus do not qualify as subacts. Determining what may or may not be a subact becomes a difficult matter. Because Kaufman so quickly accepts such explanations, sorting out the subacts seems to be rather a subjective exercise. It is much simpler to assert as Tracy does "that a complete naturalistic explanation of events rules out all possibility of divine action within them." Such explanations do not leave any room for God's spontaneous working in creation.

This is not to suggest the other extreme, that being the belief that God is always acting and intervening in history. This position excludes any independent or autonomous action and undermines the very qualities of continuance and renewing inherent within creation. There must be a position that acknowledges the built-in autonomous capabilities of creation which, while perhaps attributable to a once-for-all master plan are nevertheless significantly intelligent and self-sustaining. Concomitantly, God must be "allowed" the freedom to act within history, rather than impassively observing from beyond the world the historic process he set in motion. Admittedly there is no easy solution, and the intent of this chapter is not to present
one. The point that I wish to make is that Kaufman's position is not particularly accommodating of positive relationships between God and nature, between humankind and nature, and as a result of this to some degree, between God and humankind. There is no sense of God's revelation through nature and the reciprocating response to these common calls.

What is almost completely lacking within Kaufman's theology is what Sallie McFague calls "God-world and human-world relationships." Kaufman's emphasis is more humane relationships, which is fine and admirable, but lacking the depth that would make those relationships deeper and more significant. The new meaning and efficacy that Kaufman is seeking in re-constructing imaginative constructions cannot come from the history of imaginative constructing alone. It will come from the history of imaginative response in faith to common calls for humanity from God. Again, quoting Sallie McFague:

It must be an understanding of the God-world relationship that will move people to live by it and work for it; it must come from a place deep within human experience. It is no accident that much of the tradition's most powerful imagery does come from this place. It is imagery reflecting the beginning and continuation of life, imagery of sex, breath, food, blood and water...This language continues to be powerful because images arising from the most basic level of physical existence - the level of our tenuous hold on existence and what is needed to keep it going - are images of life and death.

These images of life and death represent the smaller and larger cycles of life, connecting the physical earth to our physical being, similarly to the creation myth that
describes Adam's creation from the dirt of the earth and made significant from that earth (though not removed or separate) by the breath of the spirit that was breathed into him. There is an earthiness to common calls which not only unites us with creation/nature but with one another. It is a shared primordial instinct and starting point which we all have and which stays with us all in some degree or other. To describe this characteristic in quite different terms, Tracy calls it "...the need to explicate a pre-conceptual dimension to our common shared experience that can legitimately be described as religious." Tracy believes that one way this can be done is to analyze symbols of life and language that represent a religious dimension within our lives. This is half of what Kaufman does. The method which Tracy suggests is easily synonymous with Kaufman's, however, I would suggest that the motivation and purpose are different.

While Tracy engages in analysis of life symbols to determine their religious dimension he understands that they reflect beliefs, or faiths which will be critical components in the determining of their adequacy. Kaufman on the other hand, analyzes the significance of these symbols to determine what basically amounts to their "cost effectiveness", their current fair market value. This is a necessary evaluation and it may be unfair to suggest that Kaufman do more. I make the point however, in view of the fact that Kaufman believes that what he does is sufficient.
In *The Analogical Imagination*, David Tracy writes of experience of a piece of art in a way that represents for me a type of experiencing of common calls. He writes:

> I do not experience a subject over against an object with my subjective consciousness in complete control. Rather I experience myself caught up in a relationship with the work of art in such manner that I transcend my everyday self-consciousness and my usual desires for control. In experiencing that actual internal relationship (no longer the external relationships of theories about the aesthetic subject or aesthetic object), I experience the impact of a realized experience, an event character of truth as a glimpse into the essential that is the real.

Tracy describes this as "truth of recognition", it is recognizing the essence of life's source or basis (or a representative symbol) and responding to it.

These common calls have specific characteristics apart from their unifying nature and relativity to human experience. They also represent an order or way of being for creation and humankind which necessitates response, the response being an acquiescence because the demand is redundant. Cooperation with these demands is necessary to life's continuation, understanding that their context is a "universal order".

This universal order structures, orders, maintains and directs creation. Only attention to the universal claims as they obtain and elicit response can provide an adequate understanding, an existentially satisfying answer to the fundamental human situation.

While it is not possible to outline proofs for the existence of such an order, to deny this order is to ignore the revelatory structure of meaning. It is only by
participating in and responding to this order, spoken through common calls that we can make judgments about the suitability of our imaginative constructions for understanding the world. This is true religion; a commitment to faithfulness to ourselves to be who we can fully be as believers, artists, academics, lovers, friends, finite yet open to the infinite God who calls us to obedience and faithfulness to God's calls.

D. Toward Construction of A More Egalitarian Theology

I have chosen the term "egalitarian" because of its broader meaning, broader at least than its current popular usage to define an equalization between sexes. Egalitarian positions or opinions are also characterized by their belief in the equality of all persons despite racial, religious, political or social differences. Kaufman is correct, I believe in asserting that there are significant motifs within Christianity which have been misrepresented and misappropriated by believers, resulting in dangerous, prejudicial attitudes and actions. His goal has been to explore the foundations of these dogmatic assertions to discover ways of reducing their strength and authority, with the hope of eventually shifting their focus and impact.

While I have been critical of aspects of Kaufman's system and methodology, on the whole, I agree with his purpose and method, subject of course, to the various modifications I have
suggested throughout this paper. Chiefly my concerns have focused on his need to acknowledge: the necessity of belief in a real God; the significance of God's revelation, available to, and as a form of communication with, humankind; the importance of createdness; and the connection between humankind and nature representing God's creation.

With the above noted inclusions, I see Kaufman's imaginatively constructive theology as a viable solution to many of the problems within theology that he is attempting to address. While he often appears quite vague regarding what those specific problems may be, his book Theology for a Nuclear Age is more focused and practical in its use of Kaufman's theological method. In this chapter I will attempt to evaluate principles of Kaufman's methodology with respect to their application to concerns he raises. In addition, I will offer some practical modifications stemming from my evaluation of his system, based on the specific concerns I have noted above.

Kaufman views the threat of nuclear annihilation as something which confronts very directly, our ways of perceiving God and the world around us. He describes it as being: "...in a significant way 'out of sync' with the central traditional claim about God's sovereignty over the world." He believes that we cannot attribute the pending nuclear annihilation to God, but sees it as something for which we must claim responsibility, as it demonstrates again, the human capacity for evil. Kaufman
suggests that traditional Christian understandings of God accommodate two popular ways of viewing such a situation:

(a) The nuclear holocaust will be God's will, perhaps even similar to the event of the flooding of the earth, during the time of Noah;

(b) God will never allow it to actually happen.

View (a) protects God's sovereignty over the course of the world - over history, and provides for the possibility of some hope for humankind despite the looming disaster. View (b) implies that appropriate human action will be understood in terms of obedience to God's will. Essentially, what both these views do, is take the future for granted, assuming that we always may anticipate a future which is positive in some respect or other. At the same time they also imply that God is responsible for nuclear arms and is using them either as punishment or threat.

Kaufman advocates reconstruction or deconstruction of those images of divine providential care which virtually guarantee human fulfillment. He writes:

They [theologians and philosophers] presuppose that life can properly be lived and knowledge pursued in terms of what is already existent and given, the values and norms and truths carried by some supposedly revelatory or other cultural tradition and the empirical data uncovered by science and history. But the new situation in which we find ourselves shows that it is a mistake to regard our human world as grounded on any fixed and finished givens, whether values or facts. Both fact and value, as the possibility of nuclear catastrophe makes clear, are always very fragile and unstable.
The future confronts human life as a "scary limit" rather than a happy future. For Kaufman however, the most serious ramification of this complacency is the failure to have taken very seriously the significance of the future for the present. It has been understood as a "given" that life could be based on the authority of faith-perspectives of the past, continued into the present and future as authoritative traditions.

These are legitimate concerns and Kaufman's goal to reconstruct relevant symbols and traditions is important. However, Kaufman is not clear on what he sees as being the purpose of these reconstructed symbols. Some purposes which he might have in mind could be:

(a) to offer a better explanation for the "new" threat of nuclear annihilation;
(b) to help God out of an awkward situation;
(c) to rationalize our own complicity in the situation in which we find ourselves;
(d) to effect some sort of change that will either remove the threat of nuclear annihilation or help us to cope with that threat more effectively.

At some level, all of these points are important to the issue Kaufman raises. However, because he generally strips God of any specific involvement or communication with humankind Kaufman can easily view the nuclear threat as a product of our own inadequate symbolizing which simply requires newer and better symbol construction. Kaufman takes a collection of very
confusing and difficult questions and issues and reduces them to what he implies is a very clear and easy problem with an equally clear and easy solution. However, the issues are not that clear, and neither is there a simple solution.

While Kaufman refers to history and culture as significant factors in the constructing of tradition he leaves unanswered many questions regarding the working of history and culture. For example, if we have held the same attitudes and values and constructions for such a long (but unspecified) period of time, what has changed and how? Has the current nuclear situation, to use Kaufman's example, evolved as a result of those values, or somehow independently of them? If these values have become outdated and indeed, dangerous, at what point in history did this occur or were the values themselves inherently self-destructive from the beginning?

The terms "history" and "culture" are far too broad (too packed) for Kaufman to rely on them so extensively without more analysis of their particular characteristics, patterns and meanings. He acknowledges repeatedly their impact on God construction, but may take that impact for granted by failing to explain it in any depth. He relies on the "processes" of history and culture as explanation for shifts or miscalculations in imaginative constructing, however this is not sufficient justification for symbol reconstruction. It is essential to Kaufman's assertion; that we must reconstruct our ultimacy symbols - to give some explanation of what has gone wrong with
them and how they have affected or been affected by historical and cultural movement. It then becomes a more constructive task to determine what the specific functions of these new symbols should be.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide such an analysis of history or culture, there are some aspects of history and culture which Kaufman overlooks (or perhaps simply takes for granted that we are aware of) which are significant to symbol evaluation and reconstruction. For example, I propose that the problem he raises, of complacency; a taking for granted of the future as well as the present, is a problem that has reoccurred in cyclical fashion throughout history. The effect of these reoccurring cycles is a snowballing, resulting in increasingly alarming historical occasions in which humankind is confronted with the necessity of, in some way redirecting or reshaping the process of history with respect to that particular problem. These serious "historical occasions" arise from a complexity of factors including a breakdown in community or communion between humankind and nature.178

There exists in creation a brokenness which manifests itself in innumerable ways, but which may always be traced (in very general terms) to alienation between humankind and creation, humankind and God, amongst humans, or between creation and God. Ultimately, of course, these all reflect some experience of alienation from God. Some specific, current examples evidencing these forms of alienation are: environmental
pollution, issues such as abortion and treatment of persons suffering from aids, the threat of nuclear war, extinction of many species of wildlife and apartheid.

In summary, what I am suggesting is that poor symbol construction is not a recent phenomenon that requires the immediate disposal of previous symbols and the constructing of brand new ones (which is often what Kaufman seems to suggest). It may be that the inevitability of complacency, particularly with respect to appropriating beliefs/faith in God's providential care is something that catches up with us in the form of any of the examples mentioned previously, or large scale direct confrontations such as wars. These serious historical occasions evidence breakdowns individually, societally, globally in values, guiding symbols or interpretations of faith commitments.

Fortunately, for us, and for the world we live in, there is already built into these complex cycles of human response and action within history, a reconstructive element which seems to insure some evaluative and renewing effort, even while a situation such as World War II, for example, is in progress. The fact that there exists a positive and negative component is in some respects the reason for the conflict situation. If there was global agreement that all Jewish persons should be "exterminated", agreement shared also by the Jewish race, there would have been no conflict per se regarding the genocide of Jews.
Similarly, while we may face the threat of nuclear annihilation, there is enough awareness of that threat, enough of what I have called "the reconstructive element" attempting to address the issue and "ward it off" that it may be difficult to perceive of it as inevitable. Kaufman might call this attitude complacent, reflecting an over reliance and dependency on themes of providential care. On the one hand, this is quite true, and on the other hand it is not true that complacency is a universally widespread condition of humankind respecting the nuclear arms issue. Creations' brokenness, while existing and problematic is not complete. There must then be something within the relating of humankind, creation and God which is a significant and positive component of symbolizing or constructing positive and valid symbols. The fact that any degree of connectedness remains, may be sufficient as another voice, an alternative opinion to negative symbolizing and its consequences.

It is possible that what I describe as "connectedness" to God through "createdness" is what Kaufman calls "history". Because of his understanding of humanity as autonomous, Kaufman stresses the personal nature of humankind, working out within the context of the world, a realized human life - fairly independently of God. Connectedness to, or with God is in a very general sense through the process of history. History is the connection, and means through which God achieves his purposes in the world.
These experiences of connectedness, or significant moments within history may at times be prophetic, in their role as indicators of the need for change, reform or reconstruction of symbols. This may in fact be how Kaufman perceives his role, that is, prophetic announcement of a complacency which has allowed us to drift too far in a direction leading to nuclear disaster.

Kaufman proposes that one particular traditional presupposition upon which we have become dependent and which needs re-working is the principle of authority.

According to this principle, theological truth is not something we humans discover (or create) in our work; it is, rather, something already present and available in tradition - especially the Bible - awaiting our appropriation. 179

It is often a very simple matter to adopt an authoritative tradition or creed as authoritative in total, without challenging or questionning aspects which may have ceased to be pertinent. The challenge with which it must be confronted is its adequacy to fulfill the goals which we set for it. Kaufman asserts that:

...all religious institutions, practices and ideas - including the idea of God - were made to serve human needs and to further our humanisation...humanity was not made for the sake of religious customs and ideas.180

I would suggest a modification of Kaufman's statement, to propose similarly that religious tradition is a framework for understanding the ultimate reference point, God. The framework itself is not infallible nor ultimate because in
part it reflects our conceptualizing, or imaginative constructing toward God. This position is very close to Kaufman's, the primary difference being that Kaufman often seems close to giving imagination ultimate status, because of its constructive ability, and because of the strength and influence of those constructs.

In further exploring the danger of reliance on the authority of tradition, Kaufman writes:

To give past formulations and conceptions that sort of normative status for the present and the future would be idolatrous: we must ourselves take full responsibility for our definitions, our interpretations and our conclusions; and this may well lead us - as we face up to the radical novelty of the historical situation which we today confront - toward understandings and interpretations of our two fundamental symbols, God and Christ...181

Kaufman sees God and Christ as "grounding symbols" being the proper focus of theological work, with creeds and the bible as secondary in concern, being derived from the two grounding symbols. These grounding symbols are for Kaufman, precisely that - symbols which have evolved from metaphors and images conceived within ordinary experience throughout history. They arrive at their ultimacy through what Kaufman describes as extrapolation or development, which occurs in such a way that they can "...serve as the ultimate point of reference for grasping and understanding all of experience, life and the world."182

Kaufman sees the processing abilities of imagination as extremely sophisticated and acute in their capacity for
qualifying and "explaining" the (an) ultimate point of reference. Despite some of the problems discussed earlier in this paper, inherent within this sort of thinking, Kaufman correctly identifies the tremendous function these frameworks and symbols serve in helping to orient human life.

Kaufman looks specifically at the symbol Christ, suggesting how it may be more effective in providing orientation today with some reconstruction. As an example of reliance on a bad interpretation of the symbol Christ's purpose and meaning, Kaufman suggests that there is within Christianity a strong theme of triumphalism which is particularly understood to be symbolized by the resurrection. He points out the emphasis on Christ's resurrection which in his opinion is given priority over understanding the significance of the crucifixion. There is again, a suggestion of the recurring theme of a heavenly reward for temporal suffering - an indicator, for Kaufman of complacency. As he describes it:

Thus, what at first seemed to be a motif of absolute self-sacrifice for others in the Christian symbolism, turns out on closer inspection to be rather an expression of prudential self-interest - given the sort of cosmic order in which we live, an order ruled by a divine king and judge who will mete out eternal rewards and punishments at the end of life or the end of time. 

This use of the symbol of the resurrection detracts from the theme of self-sacrifice, which is surely present in the life of the symbol Christ, and becomes instead a cause for imperialistic Christian attitudes and justification for
"self-aggrandizement". Followers of Jesus were the true believers, knowing the true way for life and eternal life.

One of the ramifications of this understanding, was a belief that any achievement of human fulfillment and salvation, had to be achieved via the church. This attitude in its most extreme and intolerant forms, may explain some rather violent and alarming behaviour within church history; for example, crusades against the infidels, killing of heretics, colonization of non-white (presumably non-Christian) countries and enslavement of non-Christian persons. Unfortunately, this is not only historical fact, it remains present day reality. The structure of christology had/has become problematic, in this respect, though not the stories of, or about Jesus.

It is not difficult to see how and why those committed to this mythology could easily become chauvinistic and imperialistic champions of the divine king and his son Jesus Christ, willing to fight to the death their adversaries on earth. In this mythicising of the Jesus story, the plain import of the suffering and death of Jesus - as a manifestation of real weakness in this world and of an unwillingness to use the means and methods of compulsive power to achieve objectives, as an expression of the strength to sacrifice himself completely even to his enemies - was lost sight of...

Kaufman's concern is that while these traditional concepts and images are important, and warrant our careful attention, they should not be seen to be "permanently authoritative or binding". It is in this respect that Kaufman believes we should assume responsibility for our own imaginative constructing, not assuming that the "grounding
symbols" in particular are subject only to one traditional way of interpretation.

What Kaufman is suggesting is that Jesus' life represented something radically different from the accepted norm and can function today as a symbol representing the same challenge to what remain, traditional standards. The radicalness which Jesus' life symbolizes, is a reversal of norms which promote self-seeking and self-serving. Self-promotion is not conducive to constructive community amongst creation, and in fact, leads to estrangement amongst humankind, and within their relationships to the created world around them. As Kaufman writes:

...the most profound human problem today is not estrangement from God, as understood in such highly personalistic terms, but rather the steady undermining of the conditions that make meaningful and fruitful human life possible, through our pollution and poisoning of the ecosystem, on the one hand, and through social and political and economic arrangements that are oppressive and dehumanising, on the other.186

Theology needs to be understood and reconstructed within the context of all of life. Thus, stories of Jesus must be reconstructed in view of their potential to offer paradigms of reconciliation and loving community. Kaufman views any movement within the world toward reconciliation, healing or liberation as salvific, evidencing the working of the spirit of Christ in the world. The reward of self-sacrifice for these principles is an enhancing of the quality of life for others, in that way, helping to equalize the good things the world has to
offer to everyone. By striving to make life as humane as possible, we are fulfilling ourselves, as essentially, social beings. The self-sacrificing symbol of Jesus, images the fundamental component necessary to life; that is, self-giving which makes possible all of life for all of creation, which can only ever exist within community.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Can we live in all those mythical universes at the same time? Shall we, then, we children of criticism, we men with immense memories, be the Don Juans of myth? Shall we court them all in turn? 187

Recognizing that theological constructions are essentially our own constructions of concepts of God, should go hand in hand with a realization that we are responsible for our own "theological work".

We are the ones who must persuade ourselves what the principles of absoluteness and humaneness can and must mean for our time and our world and our experience and we are the ones who must decide how their conjunction in a reality appropriate to focus the worship and devotion of modern men and women can be understood. 188

Having dealt with some of the difficulties within Kaufman's system, I wish to conclude by affirming the overall importance of a central feature of his position. In his work he has consistently sought to emphasize and educate regarding our responsibility for the meaningfulness of our God constructs for today.

Taking ownership of our God constructs requires personal involvement in and commitment to those constructs. Kaufman's
challenge is that we be in constant critical evaluation and reconstruction of our God concepts, to enable them to keep pace with situations and events in the world. One example referred to earlier is the "misuse" of patriarchal themes in scripture, to physically and/or emotionally abuse and suppress women. Understanding the Pauline writings (for example) to condone women's submissive status is no longer (if ever) a valid theme for our world. It has been grossly misused to a point where it has become part of the dark side of our society.

Kaufman's theological method encourages the active involvement of Christians in movements of liberation and social justice. As Ottati comments, it indicates that:

Christian theology should move beyond ideology toward a self-critical reflection that evaluates concepts in light of the struggle for a more humane order. 189

In this respect Kaufman has been consistent in his attempt to construct a theological method and/or religious symbol that is relevant to the challenges of contemporary society. It also opens up the potential for a critical forum with the purpose of evaluating the claims and significance of other religious and secular customs. Acknowledging the active role of imaginative constructing, places discussions of theological positions on a more horizontal plane, eliminating hierarchies of positions. All theological work is composed of a large element of imaginative constructing.

However, despite my admiration of Kaufman for bringing to the forefront, the centrality of human imaginative constructing
to theology, it does seem at the same time, that his is a theology without a starting point. Any sort of constructing, even admittedly fallible, human God constructing requires some prior faith commitment - even as motivation for the activity of God construction. However, as theologian, Kaufman has separated faith from theological work.

There does seem implicit in his life as non-theologian (his distinction) a religious faith commitment to a real God. However, by separating faith from theological work, he effectively eliminates any starting point for his theological position. We are then left wondering why Kaufman even bothers with God constructs.

The only apparent motivation for Kaufman's imaginative God constructing lies in his concern to make theology culturally relevant. Of course, it becomes immediately apparent, following this line of thought that Kaufman must have a strong commitment to theology itself - theology being thought or study of God. My point is that it is impossible to make such airtight distinctions between the presumed "academic" work of theology and religious belief and faith commitment. Despite himself, and his system, Kaufman has to allow his faith commitment to "seep" into his theological work. Despite his unwillingness to acknowledge it, I maintain that his faith commitment to a real God, has to be motivating and influencing his work as a theologian.
Assuming then that Kaufman's work does presuppose a faith commitment to God (despite his denial of same), we can better understand his desire to establish adequate God constructs. The criteria which Kaufman uses to evaluate the adequacy of God constructs is whether or not when represented by them God can be the "ultimate point of reference" for life. The theologian then must show how all of contemporary life can be brought into perspective and relation with what she is proposing God is.

Kaufman reminds us that theology is essentially "human work". It is not God-as-such who has advocated oppression of women, or black South Africans, or native North Americans, but rather imaginatively constructed concepts of God occur within particular historical and cultural context. Acknowledging the human character of these constructs frees us to revise, reconstruct and in some cases completely abandon them. As Kaufman writes:

Instead of providing a center of devotion which could draw humanity, with its petty distinctions and divisions, into a wider community, God breaks down into a plethora of little gods, each reflecting but sanctifying the interests of its worshipers and thus each contributing further to the warfare and chaos of human affairs. Such gods are constructed too much in the image of our own humanity. 190

Our God concept then becomes a reflection of our personal needs and values, rather than an ultimate construct which is valid for all of life. Kaufman understands the principle task of Christianity to be "...a ministry of
reconciliation among humans..."191 If this is the case, our God constructing will necessarily be different.

Our concern will be first and foremost to enter into community with those others with whom we are speaking, and where estrangement or separation exists to seek reconciliation with them. It will be, in short, not to make claims for ourselves or our truth against our neighbors, but to love and accept our neighbors as ourselves.192
ENDNOTES


5. Gordon D. Kaufman, Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, p. x.

6. The anthropological character of this work lay in its concern with cultural development throughout historical time as it related to religious tradition. Kaufman did not explore the origins of religious customs or cultural traditions in any great detail.


12. What I am referring to is common understandings within church tradition that purport complete dependence upon God, "without whom we are nothing". For example, free will is more often seen as rebellion against God, than creative use, and exercise of a God-given aspect of human character.


18. Gordon D. Kaufman, Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, p. 5.
21. Such as scientific method is assumed not to be conditioned historically.
24. Gordon D. Kaufman, Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, p. 44.
27. Gordon D. Kaufman, Relativism, Knowledge and Faith, p. 94
29. Paul Tillich perceives faith as "ultimate concern". This ultimate concern or religious faith develops from experiences which we perceive as having ultimate value and to which subsequently we accord ultimate loyalty or commitment. This view tends to give faith a broader scope than it has traditionally been allotted. Tillich perceives of it not as something which occupies a small corner of one's life but as ultimate concern which permeates one's life entirely.


34. Gordon D. Kaufman, Systematic Theology, p. 25.


36. Faith as ultimate concern (Tillich) enables us to understand the force of convictions or points of view which would not normally be classified as religious. Any aspect of one's life may, for Tillich, be potentially of ultimate concern.


38. Gordon D. Kaufman, Systematic Theology, p. 95.

39. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter III.


42. Gordon D. Kaufman, Systematic Theology, p. 114.

43. Gordon D. Kaufman, God the Problem, p. 15.


46. I use the term "humanistic" in describing Kaufman's conception of Christ, because of his perception that within the theological context, it is Christ who provides the humanizing dimension to life. Kaufman may be said to, in some respects, under-emphasize the deity of Christ in his stress on his humaneness. Again, this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter III.

47. Gordon D. Kaufman, God the Problem, p. 47.

48. Gordon D. Kaufman, God the Problem, p. 56.

50. This is not to say that feeling lacks cognitive significance. It has suffered however, a categorizing that elevates empirical, logical presentation over what may also be logical, explication of feeling, sense or intuition. Kaufman, thus being the empiricist that he is, is able to feel more comfortable with faith if he can re-structure it, or maybe simply re-understand it to recognize its intellect.


64. Gordon D. Kaufman, *Relativism, Knowledge and Faith* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. x - xi. At this point in his work, Kaufman has distinguished between revelation and theology, stating that it may not be possible to understand revelation through anthropological categories as clearly as it is possible to do so with theology. His reason for holding to this position is his belief (at that time) that theology is "human activity" which is not necessarily the case with revelation. However, his later work would substantiate the use of his thesis with regard to revelation as well, given his more current position that revelation is also largely human work.

65. Kaufman describes this experience as an awareness of a difference between "motive" and "limitation". These experiences which Kaufman names "drives" might also be described as "calls".


70. Kaufman does not use "complex" in the sense of "more difficult", thus implying a hierarchy of knowledge or understanding. Rather "complex" denotes the increasing multidimensional character of experience.


83. Gordon D. Kaufman, *The Theological Imagination*, p. 24. Difficulties which Kaufman has with traditional themes and images may be largely with those represented in the Old Testament. Particularly themes such as patriarchy, violence and warfare which are understood, especially by Mennonite theologians, to be primary themes throughout the Old Testament.
94. Jesus as a noncontroversial referent in the sense of his being undeniably humane, compassionate, nonviolent and in many respects egalitarian. The available information about Jesus' nature and his actions allows for considerable scope in assigning to him (a projected) interest in various (current) social and human rights causes.
100. Gordon D. Kaufman, The Theological Imagination, p. 47.
105. Gordon D. Kaufman, God the Problem, p. 86.


111. James H. Olthuis, A Hermeneutics of Ultimacy: Peril or Promise?, p. 16.


119. Kaufman makes a distinction between "personal-knowledge" as primarily "revelation" and "thing knowledge" as chiefly "discovery". This would seem to suggest that knowledge of ourselves and one another is largely unavailable to us without revelatory experience of and with God. It is not accommodating of a model whereby humankind experiences self-discovery through interaction with creation.


122. This conception of revelation ignores humankind's abilities to communicate with God in very human ways, ways that affirm our createdness, and our humanness. Instead, it elevates the supernatural understanding of revelation, perceiving it largely in terms of visions and theophanic experience etc. It is also susceptible to subjectivist interpretation by individuals, pitting one person against another as having "superior" revelatory experience of and from God.


127. One example of the merits of this perspective is its contribution to the cause of those who believe that life itself may be enjoyed, lived and expressed as art! Often, too much of a distinction is drawn between particular forms of art, which are seen to be higher, eg. music, sculpture, painting, writing and other aspects of life, which could also be seen to be artistically expressive, for example; cooking, raising children, gardening, selecting clothing, decorating, setting the table, being married etc.

The criteria of excellence or artistic expression become how well one is able to communicate what one has come to understand from sense experience. The receipt of the expression and the degree of enjoyment or relation to it then become the measures of achievement.


135. Michael Barnes, "Religion and Science: Focusing the Light of Imagination," pp. 243-244.

136. I use the term *pure facts* where Barnes uses "data-raw facts" referring to directly observable, empirically testable data.


138. David Tracey in *Blessed Rage For Order* describes "limits of" and "limits to". "Limits of" being a given; knowing that we have limits or barriers of various sorts. "Limits to", we encounter through event or situation, thus occurring within the experience.


144. I believe that these different types of rationality may be easier for women to express and understand, and take seriously than may be the case for men. Women have been less a part of the academic establishment and in some respects less committed to "its" way of "doing things." Or as Doris Lessing suggested in a 1987 interview with Maclean's it may simply be the case that "...women are more peaceful and loving than men, but they're very practical and tend not to talk as much rubbish as men when they get ideological."


146. Acknowledging of course that imagination is always a part of any "pure" academic pursuit, this would seldom be acknowledged as being the case. The hesitancy to admit to the contributing role of imagination is itself a curb on imaginative activity.


162. Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, p. 81


173. This is not surprising because art itself may be an expression of response to (a) common call(s). The artist and the piece process and pass on the experience to others who may be receptive to it.


178. I use "community" in its function as verb to describe joint possession, enjoyment, liability etc.


183. It could also be argued that this ultimate point of reference is not sophisticated or acute, but rather more of an inclination, possibly even a "whim".


190. Gordon D. Kaufman, *The Theological Imagination*, p. 44.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


