CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION AND THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION
IN THE WESLEYAN SPIRIT
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Introduction

Developmental theories are commonly applied in secular psychology and education fields. However, some Latin American pastors and Christian educators, I fear, have an aversion to such theories. My observation is that some believe that to include pyschology in our attempt to understand the life and development of Christians is to lose the primacy of faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. For some, to include psychology in the life of a Christian is considered not to have enough faith. One of the reasons for that attitude may be that many pastors believe that the Holy Spirit is responsible not only for salvation, but, as well, for maturity. Until now, many Christian educators and pastors, it seems to me, in my context, believe that there is no need to integrate psychology and Christian development. This paper looks at developmental theories as one way of both understanding and directing Christian maturity and development. There are few if any studies in Spanish about Christian formation and developmental theories. Furthermore, the different materials that present the integration of developmental theories and Christian formation are written from Western or European perspectives. The lack of integrative material in Spanish is one of the main obstacles for Latin American pastors and leaders to have an understanding of the importance of human development in the processes of faith. The integration of developmental theories and Christian development, I believe, will enable us more effectiebly to make disciples in Christ's image and fulfill our mission.

A few years ago, I decided to continue my psychology degree program in Peru through an extension-online program. The reason, I needed to understand myself first in order to understand and help others. By understanding myself, I meant to understand the different stages which include not only spiritual areas but also mental and physical. There are aspects in the life of every Christian that need to be addressed psychologically. Just like I had, many people have the tendency to blame God for different things because they attribute everything to spiritual causes rather than to human processes.

In order to apply developmental theories to our context, it is necessary, first, to understand the theories of development as they have been developed by others. This essay will be divided into four sections. Since the developmental theories will address the role of Christian formation, I will dedicate the first part to explaining Christian formation from different perspectives related to particular persons or groups. I will bring to this essay some Latin American perspectives. The second part of the writing will present the different developmental theories with their main representatives. In this case, these theories will be explained in the secular area first. The areas that will be the focus of this essay are Intellectual, Moral, and Socio-cultural development. The third part will have Christian implications of the same theories for a Latin American context. The fourth part of the essay will provide the implications for transformation in Christian education and in ministry.

Christian Formation

Christian formation is not a modern practice. Some people mistakenly believe that the practice of Christian formation started together with modern instruction imparted in Bible colleges or seminaries, regardless of the denomination or belief. Some educators, theologians or pastors use the expression "Christian Formation," while others refer to it as "Spiritual Formation."

The word spirituality itself can embrace different meanings in different cultures, and includes people from Asia, Europe, Africa and America. As well, and more important, spirituality can be turned into rituals and legends, from Christianity to Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and others (McGinn and Leclercq 1993, xi). Although there can be misunderstandings, the word "spirituality" in Christianity suggests that all people live under the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit. For this particular reason, Mark Maddix uses the expression "Christian Spirituality" (Maddix 2010, 240). For the purpose of this essay, for consistency, the terms presented in books as spiritual formation will be changed to Christian formation.

Though Christian formation has tremendous roots in the Christian tradition, its modern understanding or meaning can be easily misunderstood. Jeffrey P. Greenman in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* says that Christian formation is an ongoing "response to the reality of God's grace" in order to be like Jesus Christ. This is possible with the work of the Holy Spirit. A tremendous part of it also falls in the "community of faith." As well, it is not possible to put a timeframe on it. Christian formation is not a one week process. Christian formation is a "lifelong journey of transformation" (Greenman 2010, 24). What Greenman says is actually contradictory with what most of the theological schools, undergraduate or graduate do. In the case of my Bible college, the Christian Formation class is designed to last two weeks. There is no follow up from either the instructor or school. The main reason is because once the class is over, the learner is formed or shaped to what the professor wanted.

In a paper presented in the "Curriculum Development, Contextualization and Assessment" class, I presented the problem of having this Christian formation in a two-weeks intensive module. "Students have the desire to go to ministry with a great deal of knowledge about Bible, theology, hermeneutics, preaching and others. It is expected that the Spiritual Formation class will change the old attitudes that some students carry."

I mentioned before that Christian formation is not a modern practice. It has biblical roots. Less L. Steele in *On The Way: A Practical Theology of Christian Formation* notes practices in the four gospels, Paul's writing and General Epistles. Each one of the gospels has a different presentation, but together or separated, they all come to explain the process of transformation. In the Gospel of Matthew, Christian formation is understood as acting in accordance with the teachings of Christ. The emphasis is to "live a righteous life." Matthew 5:20 says, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (NIV). Since the goal is to be Christ-like people, Christian formation eradicates immorality and evildoing in the life of the practitioner. In the

Gospel of Mark the process of transformation is presented as suffering. This is not only related to a physical stage of pain, but can be also related to abandonment. In Mark 8:34 Jesus says "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (NIV). Luke's narrative is directed towards others rather than the self. Here, it is implied, transformation comes not only by one's self but as part of the transformation of others. In Luke 3:11b Jesus says, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same" (NIV). Finally, in John, the process of transformation falls to the work of the Holy Spirit. This does not meant the lack of the Holy Spirit presence in other gospels but John focuses on the high importance of the Spirit in transformation. As John 3:6b says, "the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (NIV) (Steele 1990, 25-28).

Christian formation is a constant communion with the Holy Spirit and the self. Arthur Holder in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* says that although the Spirit is one, people are not the same. Hence the manifestations of the Holy Spirit may vary (Holder 2011, 2-3). Evan B. Howards presents three dimensions or ways to see Christian formation: practical, dynamic and as an academic discipline. Practice is relationship with the Holy Spirit. This can be through prayer, music or other disciplines. The dynamic, however, is the way people understand Christian formation through a certain teaching or belief, like adopting a Wesleyan practice of Christian formation. The last one, academics, is a "field of study" in certain eras in history (Howard 2008, 15-16).

From a Wesleyan point of view, I would like to bring up the definition given in *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm*, by Diane Leclerc and Mark Maddix. The description provided in this book is that Christian formation is a process of transformation. The goal is to become "little Christs" through the presence of the Holy Spirit. It extends its meaning to "being a disciple." In this process, there is an interaction of the whole being, "body, soul, thoughts, feelings, emotions, hopes, fears and dreams." Maddix says that it starts with the desire of being transformed, but is an ongoing process, in which we are not alone. Christians are guided by the Holy Spirit to "participate with God," and that is a lifetime process (Maddix 2011, 9-13).

Gary Teja is one of leading Latin American writers about Christian formation. His book *Formacion Espiritual: Pautas para el Crecimiento* (Spiritual Formation: Guidelines for Growth) defines Christian formation as holiness or the process of sanctification. Teja emphasizes this is only for those who have accepted Christ as their Savior, and Christian formation enables Christians to be "adults in Christ," to become mature (Teja 2008, 6-15).

I asked Ruth Cordova for her definition through the years of experience and teaching on the field. Ruth Cordova is the first Peruvian woman to be assigned as a Global Missionary for the Church of the Nazarene. Cordova teaches in Nazarene seminaries in North and Central America in the fields of History, Missiology and Christian Formation. In Cordova's words, Christian formation is the "practice of piety acts or spiritual disciplines, and mercy acts or helps to needy one. Mercy acts according to John Wesley are doing good to your neighbor. This is with the purpose of forming Jesus Christ in us, as Apostle Paul says, to show God's love through our lives" (Ruth Cordova, email message to author, April 12, 2019).

While some authors present Christian formation as a journey, others present it as a process. However, all agree that as Christians we are highly dependent on the Holy Spirit. Hence, Christian formation is a transformation through the Holy Spirit to be Christ-like disciples.

Since, then, Christian formation is a journey, there is a need to find "resources" for said experience. The resources are present in the life of Christ, whom we are trying to imitate. The book *The Upward Call: Spiritual Formation and the Holy Life* presents a list of the "disciplines." These disciplines are "means of grace" that create "conditions for the Spirit to flow more freely" (Tracy, et al. 1994, 51-53).

Among the disciplines is worship, the means by which we encounter God. Worship is biblical, and it is designed to "celebrate Christ." To worship is to participate in communion through the sacraments. As well worship includes praise and singing, a strong Wesleyan characteristic. "Worship begins in praise to the God who has lavished His grace upon us in Christ Jesus." Another discipline is the Word, which means encountering God in the Bible. Psalms 119:105 says "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (NIV). The study of the Bible requires a disciplined life. Prayer is another discipline that is essential for personal growth. There is no growth without prayer. To pray is to talk with God in an attitude that welcomes change, as well as one that finds a place to rest (Tracy, et al. 1994, 55-93).

Developmental Theories

We learned that Christian formation is a process of growth. This process is a life-time process. We never cease that growth. As a person grows in Christ through the process of Christian formation, there are physical and psychological developments.

In order to integrate Christian formation growth with stages of human development, I will explain several, intellectual, moral, and socio-cultural developmental theories.

Developmental theories describe different types of change of an individual through the life-span. These theories are explanations of the changes that a person faces from childhood to adulthood. There are different theories. As Mark Dombeck says, "Different developmental theories describe different types of changes." For example, Jean Piaget writes on intellectual development, and Lawrence Kohlberg on moral development (Dombeck 2019).

Developmental theories describe a process of transformation. Individuals do not remain the same from the moment they are born until the moment of death. The developmental theories, in some instances, use experiences in childhood that affect the person in adulthood. Kara L. Kuther says each stage of life is very important, and that the development process can be divided into different sections. These are multidimensional, multidirectional, plastic, influenced by multiple contexts, and multidisciplinary. Development is multidimensional because it embraces different areas. As we grow we mature physically, emotionally and cognitively. Physical refers directly to the body, cognitive to "maturation of thought process," socio-emotional to the changes in social skills areas and relationships with others. These areas, although discrete, interact in life development. Development is multidirectional when the individual shows balance

in his/her life. During childhood, for example, a person manifests different reflections that are lost during adulthood. Childhood is a period of "gaining and losing." Development is plastic, which means "malleable." Certain tasks that have been lost can be regained through exercise. Development contexts refer to the environment in which the person grows. This can be family or neighborhood or friends or culture. Finally, multidisciplinary refers to the different fields that contribute to the study of human development. Not mentioned in Kuther's explanation of multidisciplinary, but in this essay, is in the field of theology (Kuther 2017, 4-7).

Development is an ongoing process. Some research describes development from before the person is born. This is the first period, prenatal (conception to birth). The one-celled organism transforms into a human baby with remarkable capacities to adjust to life outside the womb. After birth, this process of transformation continues day-to-day. Toddlers (birth to 2 years) early interact with others. In early childhood (2 to 6), a sense of morality starts through playing with peers. The middle childhood (6 to 11) stage includes the "school years." Here basic skills in cognitive development start with literacy, and in the social stage through friendship. In adolescence (11 to 20) tremendous physical changes occur with sexual maturity. As well, in this stage, some tendencies of autonomy start. Early adulthood (20-40) is when education is completed. The development in this stage is related mostly to independence or even changing lifestyle. Middle adulthood (40-60) is the stage where people help others to develop, such as children. "They become more aware of their own mortality." The last period, late adulthood (60 to death) is the last stage. Late stage adults adjust to lifestyle changes such as retirement, and reflect upon their lives (Berk 2001, 7-8)

The study of developmental theories is very important. The reason is because it helps us to understand the people that live around us. At some point we are going to be asked to work with them. These people can be from children to adulthood. It is important as well because developmental theories help us to understand ourselves. John Santrock says that development is "filled with information about who we are, how we have come to be this and what and where our future will take us." Santrock says as well that developmental theories emphasize the life-time changes in the person. He contrasts this to the traditional approach, which focuses on changes from birth to adolescence with little or no changes in adulthood. Life-span development describes all the stages, from conception until death. (Santrock 2002, 6-9).

What Santrock says about understanding oneself through the developmental theories is very interesting. As part of an assignment for the "Transformational Learning Across the Life-Span" class I wrote a journal in which I included the following: "My childhood was completely in the Bible college. I grew up among many people, mostly students from different parts of Peru. Living in the Bible college is something that many people would consider a blessing, but not in my case, when I try to look back. As much as I love my parents' ministry, our house was part of the college, like an extension, to which I did not want to be part. There was no separation. School was home and home was school. People came in and out from our house, for different reasons, for a spoon or a chair, from breakfast to dinner or due to a mid-night sickness. I believed that was part of the responsibility of my dad to be a president, but, as I was able to talk with him recently, I wished there was a separation of family and school." Some incidents that happened during those years affected my relationship with others, my parents and especially with God.

To summarize the concepts that were presented before, I would like to present a definition written by Kathleen Stassen Berger in *The Developing Person through the Life Span*: "Theories are practical, they frame and organize our millions of experiences, influencing the entire life span" (Stassen B. 2011, 36).

Intellectual Development

For the purpose of this essay and the integration of the theories with Christian formation, I will focus on three main developmental theories. Those theories are: intellectual, moral, and socio-cultural. Each of the said theories have certain representatives and implications. The following part of this essay will present the theories, main philosophies, and characteristics. Understanding that development is from before birth until death, I will try to summarize the different ages that each theory covers, not just childhood.

The first of the theories that I will address is intellectual development, or as others present it, cognitive development. The reason to start with this theory is because most of the following theories that will be addressed like moral, socio-cultural and physical development, are preceded by intellectual theory or developed at about the same time. As a person grows intellectually a person is able to understand certain aspects of development. In order to be consistent in this essay, I will address this theory as intellectual development alone, rather than mix terminologies.

Piaget disagreed that intelligence was "fixed." That was a common belief until Piaget developed his own studies with children. The development of the intelligence is a process similar to the physical one. The maturation of it depends as well upon interaction with others and the environment in which we are living (McLeod 2018).

People change in different areas through their life-span. In the intellectual development theories , theorists focus on "the role of thought on behavior." The main theorist of intellectual development is Jean Piaget. Piaget says that in order to understand children, and their reasons for acting, it is important to understand first the way they think: "thinking influences all of behavior." As persons grow, from childhood to becoming adults, they pass through four different stages in their thinking, Piaget says. Sensorimotor is the first one, covering from birth to 2 years old. In this stage, children start to "understand the world" and use their basic motor skills by "watching, listening, touching and tasting." The second stage is the Preoperational. This stage covers from 2 to 6 years. The child uses language to communicate, and thoughts to guide actions. However, thinking is not fully developed and there may be some errors in their actions. The third one is the Concrete operations, from 7 to 11 years old. This is the school time, in which thinking becomes part of their daily action. In this stage, thinking remains limited to certain operations, and is not fully mature. The last stage is the Formal Operations, from 12 to adulthood. Thinking becomes more logical, creating possibilities and events. Thoughts become complex with reasoning and even solutions (Kuther 2017, 16-17).

I grew up in a small town in the north of Peru. The name of the city is Chiclayo. When I was a child, that city would have been less than one-million habitants. I recall so many incidents

while growing up that made me feel slower than others. While others were able to remember things that were read I forgot them in few seconds. While for some people numbers were easy, for me they were never in the right place. I always considered that I grew up thinking differently than the others, but in a negative way. Although I was considered to be creative by some educators, by others I was just slow. The importance of mentioning that it was a small town is to emphasize that there was no specialist to help me or to whom my parents could have taken me. Professors just did not pay attention to the slow ones but, rather, to those they could brag about being members of their class.

Years later, I became aware of dyslexia, and I saw myself. While reading about this theory and the process of maturation, I recall that as a child I thought that I would understand numbers when I got to another level of education. When I started primary, things went the same way and I thought that, in high school, my brain was going to develop to a point to understand numbers, and this did not happen. I carried that belief until college, where things were not solved. Indeed, since intellectual development comes in stages, it makes me question the lack of interest in educators to see the deficiencies in myself towards that development.

Moral Development

We all face moral questions through our life. Although, as children, we do not know the meaning of morality, we do things mostly by the sense of right or wrong, based on what the consequences will be. As a child, I wondered if I should or shouldn't keep the groceries' change for myself. Growing up, moral dilemmas came regarding attending or not attending classes to avoid exams. Nowadays, for example, I am questioning myself about the Venezuelan immigration and the response of the Peruvian government. How much of this situation shall I accept? How is this "exodus" going to affect my country in a few weeks, months or years?

Moral development deals with "rules and conventions about what people should do in their interaction with other people." These so-called rules are present even when a person is not engaged with others, "intrapersonally." The person has to deal with his or her own judgment "interpersonally" when others help to resolve conflicts (Santrock 2002, 240). Moral development has several representatives or "theorists;" the main theorists being Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Piaget's approach is simpler than Kohlberg, who share some similarities in the process (Estep and Kim 2010, 125).

Piaget's theory of moral development was developed after observation of children at play. Children decided what to do based upon games' rules. Piaget extended his study from observation to questioning, and described two levels; heteronomous morality or moral realism and autonomous morality or moral autonomy. In moral realism, rules are "immutable and external." These rules are established by outside figures that have influence over the child. At the second stage, the rules are developed from the inside of the person based on his or her judgment, in order to survive in certain aspects of life (Estep and Kim 2010, 126; Santrock 2002, 240).

The second and most prominent theorist behind moral development is Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg described moral reasoning. One of the differences between Piaget's and

Kohlberg's theories is that Piaget focused on "what is right and what is not right" while Kohlberg tries to identify at what point of life the person rationalizes about the decisions made. The second difference is that Kohlberg developed three levels rather than two. The levels are preconventional, conventional and postconventional. Each one of these levels has two stages (Estep and Kim 2010, 126).

In moral development, there is an emphasis on how people interact with others, or how people decide to act in certain times based on "rules and regulations" (Santrock 2002, 247). These stages start from childhood (preconventional) and continue to adulthood (postconventional).

At the first level, Preconventional Morality, which covers the ages 4 – 10 years old, the standards of judging if things are right or wrong are from external sources rather than internal. The two stages are: Punishment Orientation and Naïve Reward Orientation. In Punishment Orientation, the child relies first upon the physical consequences of his or her acts. In other words, the child obeys the authority to avoid punishment. In the Naïve Reward Orientation, the child follows his or her actions with individualistic perception. The individual is "nice" to others so others will be nice to him or her. The second level, Conventional Morality, appears usually during adolescence, and, similarly to the previous level, morality is based on external factors. But here the external factors refer to rules and standards provided by the person's environment. The stages are Good-Boy/Girl Orientation and Authority Orientation. In the first stage, the individualistic perspective turns to concerns about being tagged as good or bad by a superior or "authoritative figure." Social approval is more important than a particular incentive. The second stage, also called Law and Order, focuses on a similar perspective: duty and respect for authority and laws. Said laws are "set down by society." The third and last level is Postconventional Morality, which bases morality upon autonomy and is not dependent upon an affirmation by a third subject. The stages here are Social Contract orientation and Universal Moral Principles. In Social Contract, people obey rules not for their benefit but for all. These rules can be laws established by society or peers. The Universal Moral Principles are general values that create self-conflict upon deciding for resolutions (Estep and Kim 2010, 122-128; Stassen B. 2011, 370).

Socio-Cultural Development

Earlier studies understood that a person raised in a certain culture or environment creates different patterns than those from other cultures or environments. These studies created a wrong impression that people that developed higher skills came from "superior" cultures and these studies found "deficients" in others (Berk 2001, 24).

The fact is that we are not alone. We do not grow isolated from other people. Social interaction is always part of the development of an individual. "We are embedded in a context that shapes how we think and who we become." This theory in particular is presented by Lev Vygotsky. Socio-cultural development preceeds both moral and intellectual development. For Vygotsky, a child develops certain skills by imitating others who are more highly advanced. Those observed skills are later internalized and repeated on their own until they are completely mastered. Social experiences train children how to think. Another name for this theory is Guided

Participation. This is because the person sees others as models to follow. This theory emphasizes that there is a process from zero to expertise, also called scaffolding learning. Learning can be achieved in a formal or informal setting (Kuther 2017, 177). One definition or explanation for scaffolding is, "Children who experience more difficulty in task performance are in need of greater assistance and guidance from an adult. When the child has learned to complete the task independently, the scaffolds are removed by the adult, as they are no longer needed" (HQ 2018).

For example, some people in order to draw, first need assistance. If the child cannot draw a certain image, a pattern is provided for them to follow. When finally he or she can do it with more practice, the pattern is removed. There is no more assistance. There are many times in which people expect children to learn by themselves. It is common in my culture to see parents who want their children to find out first what to do with a certain thing before guiding them. There is no scaffolding application in parents instruction. Sometimes, this generates judgment upon children who are not capable to accomplish a task.

Berk observes that Vygotsky developed this theory in order to stress that the role of adults in the development of children is highly important. The adults or even older children are the ones responsible to assist younger ones to learn to achieve a certain task. "Once children internalize the essential features of these dialogues, they can use the language within them to guide their own thought and actions and acquire new skills." These acquired skills do not stay the same. Children improve to the point of being able to guide others. Socio-cultural development does not occur only between adult and child. Adults-to-adults also creates a certain type of development. An instructor in driving, for instance, generates learning skills that will be internalized by the other (Berk 2001, 24-35). Vygotsky believes that socio-cultural development is a continuous process. The more interaction, the more skills.

Interaction of Developmental Theories with Christian Formation

There are no Christian psychology or counseling program in any school in my context. In Peru, only universities offer the degree of psychology. Psychology faculties only focus on theories based on scientific methods.

Most of the Christian people, with whom I have had the opportunity to interact, who went to psychology studies, separated from the church half way in their program. When interacting with them, they commented several times that before "they lived in fantasy" and now "they believe facts." I am not blaming the students. It is part of the church to develop a strong faith in people, so "theories" will not separate them from Faith.

As I mentioned before, I suffered some childhood traumas at home and outside the home. I was bullied by a relative and by students in the Bible college. This created some internal madness in my life and at the same time I was dealing with my lack of intellectual development due to dyslexia. For this reason, I decided to address these issues with a professional, but as mentioned, there is no Christian counseling, so I went to a "regular" professional. In one of the sessions, I related about my religion and faith and his answer was "I do believe in God but His work is limited. I do not believe it when I hear a person say his or her life was bad before and

thank God I changed." Faith does not have any relevance in that field. In fact, schools in Peru and other countries in Latin America completely separate faith from science. They argue that their studies are fact while God is not.

On the other hand, there are pastors in Peru who completely reject the theories embedded in psychology. This is not only because they have seen many of their members leave the church but also because they believe the Holy Spirit is the only one who can deal with personal issues, either from the present or the past. I have been in several services in which my pastor talked very badly about people who are depressed. The reason, people who are depressed or who have some problems are not living fully under the Holy Spirit, dedicating their life to prayer, or they do not love God enough to trust. As well, in his sermons, he emphasized that there is no need for psychologists, that people who go to that field should change their field because God is the only one capable to heal everything.

There are not many studies that demonstrate the integration of theories mentioned above with Christian formation. There are three general camps. On one side there is the "Social Science Exclusivity," camp, which is related to the example I gave above. It rejects the Scripture. The other camp is "Scriptural Exclusivity." This is what I provided in the second example, in which pastors do not believe in the integration of science regarding the development of the person. The third one is a more integrative approach. This one includes both, Social Science and Scriptural Primacy creating an "Integrative Dialog" (Estep and Kim 2010, 41-42). One of the most important studies is the one presented by James Fowler. Fowler develops stages of childhood and their relation to faith formation (Estep and Kim 2010, 51).

Not many people, especially in my context, approve of integrative dialog. Professionals in the field of psychology rely on science, while pastors only rely on one book, the Bible. The unification of both is the perfect approach. Scripture is God's special revelation, as 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," and creation is God's general revelation, as Job 38:1 says "Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm'" (NIV) (Estep and Kim 2010, 45).

As Christians, we have to be able to see the possibilities of integrating Christian formation and human development. There are different factors such as culture, context or environment that influence our life in Christ and our personal development. As humans, there are things that are adopted through our life that now result in who we are (Estep and Kim 2010, 57).

There are two biblical passages that I can use to show the interaction of Scripture with theories in Christian Formation. The first one is in the Old Testament: 1 Samuel 2:26, "And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people" (NIV). The second one is in the New Testament: Luke 2:52, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (NIV).

Christian Formation and Developmental Theories

In intellectual development, the person grows through different stages of reason and thought. Once a stage is completed, another stage is added, "building upon" and incorporating new thoughts. This also occurs in the development of Christian formation. Kelly B. Cartwright in the *Journal of Adult Development* says that individuals and their understanding of a "Higher Power progresses through stages that are parallel in nature to the original Piagetian stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational." In each stage, like the ones in Piaget, the individual's understanding incorporates new ideas and beliefs, adding to the previous ones, but also limited to their current stage. However, different to the Piaget theory, the Christian understanding of spirituality is not limited to a certain age. "Stages may occur at any point in a person's lifetime," and this "depends on experiences and motivations" (Cartwright 2001, 115-118).

Estep and Kim in *Christian Formation* provide examples of intellectual development. Although not presented as a theory, the example of Paul when testifying about himself is a reflection of it. In I Corinthians 13:11 Paul reflects, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me" (NIV). While what is presented in I Corinthians is part of regular growth, scholars found significant indicators that develop according to students' capacity to understand. This instruction in particular is found in the wisdom literature in the Old Testament. It moves from passive to active learning. This was possible by a process of obedience, observance, assimilation, understanding, mastery and pondering (Estep and Kim 2010, 77-81).

Similarly to intellectual development, the Bible does not have a theory of moral development. However the scripture provides a "framework" that integrates morals and values that lead to transformation. Psalms 119:34 says, "Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart" (NIV). Jesus' teachings are filled with morality lessons. Perry Clouse, in *Christian Formation,* identifies parallels between the teachings of Jesus and Kohlberg's six stages of moral development, particularly in regard to Jesus' "Law of Love." Jesus understood law and he himself testified of the importance of it. Jesus presented "better ways" than the structures of his time, and, as well, Jesus taught respect for every person (Estep and Kim 2010, 131-133).

Mildred Bangs Wynkoop in *A Theology of Love* provides an integration of moral development and Christian formation. For Wynkoop, moral integrity is important and needed in the process of sanctification. The lack of moral integrity represents sin, and separates God from human beings. Morality involves loving relationships not only with God but with others. Morality implies a total communication with God and the actions that we do as persons are in relation with what is right or wrong, not to the society but to God. How we choose affects our communion with Him. In Wynkoop's words, "moral nature is capable of integrity, and goodness is defined as moral integrity and badness as absence of integrity." To be Christian is to be defined by ethics and morals established in the Scripture. Moral integrity creates certain levels of "crisis" from decisions we make and the possible consequences. Morality represents God's concern over our actions, and is relevant to holiness of life (Wynkoop 1972, 165-182).

Donald Joy, in an article entitled "Human Development and Christian Holiness," in *The Asbury Seminarian*, compares the process of moral development through the life of John Wesley and his response to God to the three levels developed by Kohlberg. The first level is the "Natural Man," the second the "Legal Man, and, finally, the "Evangelical Man." The natural man is the person with no knowledge or fear towards God, and "walks in darkness." The natural man "has neither faith nor love: one that is awakened, fear without love." This person is selfish by nature. As Wesley matured in his relationship with God and after facing certain encounters or events he entered into stage two, the legal man. Wesley says "I was now properly under the law." Wesley had progressed, and that progress not only affected his own life but the lives of others. Experiences from the past are of significant relevance in this stage to see the transition or transformation into a new person. However, the Wesley in the second stage is still a Wesley that imposed his own law upon others. There was a need for further maturity and this is the last stage, the evangelical man. Here, a more sensitive Wesley appears to others. In between each stage a sense of recognition is needed in which a person admits his or her own faults in order to advance (Joy 1976, 5-25).

What the different authors presented in their integration of moral development and faith formation has a lot of relevance in the Wesleyan tradition. Holiness is a process in which a person from not knowing about God comes to Him with a sense of respect and values His teachings, accepts and practices them, and these become part of his or her daily life. Moral development in faith formation is an ongoing process, learning from experiences, and adapting them. Holiness and moral integrity are integrated. A person cannot serve the Lord fully if his or her moral relation to God and with others is not good.

Through the socio-cultural developmental theory we learned the importance of guidance and the concept of scaffolding. As the other two developmental theories mentioned before, this theory is not called so in the Bible, but there are examples that help us to see its application. Proverbs 22:6 says "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it" (NIV). Other versions translated this as train, help or guide. The Spanish translation of this verse presents it as instruction: "instruct children…."

Sharon Galgay Ketchman in *Teaching the Next Generation: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching Christian Formation* says that socio-cultural development can be used in the process of engaging others to discover and mature in faith, either children, youth or adults. There is not a particular age for this. People need guidance to learn, and not just to learn the content but to learn how to apply faith to their lives and internalize faith so they will be able to replicate faith on their own. "Faith formation occurs while doing the Christian faith with others." Another implication of socio-cultural theory is "belonging." Here, the person is engaged in the practices that are commonly practiced by others (Galgay K. 2016, 100-112).

Implications in Christian Education

As mentioned earlier, traditional psychology and Christian educators do not find so much integration in countries in Latin America. There is a strong rejection on both sides. Robert Pazmiño in *An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective: Foundational Issues in Christian*

Education describes four different approaches. The first approach is the so called "differentiated." In this approach, there is a clear separation between science and faith. What is needed by the person in secular areas requires psychology and what is needed in faith requires being managed by religion. The second approach totally discards any possibility of integration, leaving the person's life "shaped by religious insights and perspectives unattained by psychological or developmental insights." The third approach it is the one that integrates both psychology and religion. However, it is misguided or "misdirected." This is because it gives to secular responses no theological dimensions. In other words, psychology weighs more than religion. The last approach is integrated with religious values. In this last approach, Christian educators like Donald Joy look for possible relationships between theology and psychology. There is a responsibility of the person to "discern" how to incorporate theories into Christian educational practices (Pazmiño 2006, 190-191).

People are created by God. The variety in each individual makes a person unique and represents the "marvelous creation and the patterns God has created." As Christians we believe there is a unique way in which sin affects us and this is the area in which traditional psychology applies to our life. As well, transformation occurs when the Holy Spirit "encounters the human spirit." This transformation occurs through life-span development (Pazmiño 2006, 189-193).

Conclusion

Christian formation is the process in which we are transformed into new creatures. This transformation is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Similarly, in the developmental theories, this process occurs in different stages with the purpose of maturation, not only physical, which was not addressed in this essay, but intellectual, moral, and social, and other areas as well.

The agent of transformation is the Holy Spirit, who is present throughout all the development of a person. Each theory presents aspects that cannot be neglected or rejected by Christianity, though, the development of a person in Christ is fundamental.

It is important for Christian educators, pastors, leaders and everyone who is assigned to work with a certain group to understand the importance of science and its contributions to the society. Theories provide guidance to understand a particular individual, and help us to see what stage of life has been achieved. That affects spiritual development. A person that grew up in a context of violence, hate and oppression will have more problems understanding the love of God to all His children. A person whose intellectual development has been hindered in a secular environment can be supported through the work of Christian educators. Persons, either children or adults, who are not socially integrated will have difficulties adjusting to a community of faith or even with the relationship with God. The role of educators, pastors or leaders is to guide them towards transformation and its advantages.

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