postadolescents must at least be mentioned in concluding this chapter. These difficulties concern theological and ecclesial challenges.

- *What is the place of the critical thinker in a congregation?* This question does not refer only to those who expect, for example, a sermon to be intellectually sound. Rather, it refers to an attitude of criticism or even of skepticism toward the Christian faith itself. Can theology and the church limit themselves to those who "have faith" and who are in agreement with the congregation? Shouldn't there be places, spaces, and opportunities for being critical and experimental about the faith without having to leave the church?
- *Can the church appreciate experimental lifestyles?* One characteristic of postadolescence is its openness for new possibilities and for lifestyles that are different from the parents' lives and from society's traditional expectations. At certain times in the past, for example in the 1960s, this amounted to a real counterculture; today, more moderate deviations can be expected–regarding food and clothes, entertainment and housing, media and cultural preferences, relationships and sexual orientations. The experimental lifestyles of postadolescence can clearly come into contradiction with what the adult members of the church consider acceptable. Yet if the church is to become more attractive for people going through postadolescence, we have to distinguish between what is theologically necessary and what is just customary in the church, thus making space for new and different ways in the church and discovering that postadolescent experimentation can become a learning field for the adults in the church as well.

CHAPTER 5

Church, Individual Religion, Public Responsibility

Images of Faith between Modern and Postmodern Adulthood

The preceding chapter on postadolescence made it necessary to take an approach that is in line with this new stage in the life cycle and that was therefore different from the approach used for childhood and adolescence in chapters 2 and 3. With the present chapter, we can return to the procedure established in the first three chapters, that is, we can confront the modern understanding of the life cycle, which now has become the traditional view, with those changes that are emerging today. Since this procedure will be of special importance in this chapter, it may be helpful to be reminded of the reasons behind this way of approaching adulthood.

I am interested in adulthood as part of what may be called the postmodern life cycle and in the contribution of practical theology to helping people lead their lives faithfully and responsibly under the conditions of postmodernity. Consequently, the first task may be seen as describing and understanding the position of adulthood in postmodernity, the second as offering guiding images of faith that are capable of addressing the demands of postmodern life.

Since it cannot be presupposed that the views of postmodernity offered by philosophical analyses also hold true empirically for contemporary forms of everyday life, a more inductive procedure is

in place for practical theology. In any case, a more empirical approach is needed if practical theology is to address the demands of postmodern life as contemporary people actually experience them. This is why I will start by asking about the once modern understanding of adulthood, which now has become the traditional one. In a second step, my focus will be on the changes that may be observed when we compare modern adulthood with today's experiences and perceptions of adult life. After this, I will be in the position to ask, in a third step, how theology and the church may respond to the challenges that postmodern adulthood entails for them.

The Traditional Vision: The Modern Autonomous Individual

Modernity has been especially productive in terms of images of adulthood. This is why my focus in this section will be on such images. In some ways, we may say that modernity itself was closely connected with the proud hope that humankind had finally reached adulthood and maturity. In any case, the immature dependence of preenlightenment times was to be overcome. Kant's famous response to the question, "What is Enlightenment?" may be understood as a powerful image defining adulthood: leaving the state of being a dependent minor, leaving the state of not being autonomous.[1] In Kant's understanding, the lack of autonomy first of all referred to a lack of autonomous judgment–a state of not making use of one's rational capacities as a human person. *Sapere aude!*–Dare to know!–is the decisive step toward enlightenment.

On a more popular level, one might say that modernity stands for the equating of adulthood with autonomy, with independence, and with rationality. In this view, dependence is in turn identified with being a child who is still lacking autonomy, or with an elderly person who has lost his or her autonomy due to age or illness. Proper adulthood is then limited to that time of life in which one supposedly is in full possession of one's abilities and is therefore able to lead an autonomous life.

Another well-known image of adulthood was set forth by Sigmund Freud from the perspective of psychological health. For him, the ability to love and to work–*Lieben und Arbeiten*–characterizes the healthy adult.[2] And Freudian psychotherapy is aimed at restoring the ability to love and to work where it has been lost.

Erik Erikson, one of Freud's later followers in the United States (and our main source for the modern understanding of the life cycle), has reformulated the psychoanalytic understanding of adulthood. In his account of the human life cycle, Erikson uses the term

"generativity" in order to describe the positive pole of adult development.[3] Generativity is a term that needs some explanation. From its Latin etymology, generativity points to the act of generating or producing something. It refers to the biological process of procreation but also to human work producing all kinds of artifacts. So with the notion of generativity, adulthood becomes identified with parenthood and with being part of the work force–or, in one of Erikson's more philosophical interpretations, with responsibility for the next generation in general and with creative work in all kinds of fields.[4]

In order fully to understand the image of generativity and its meaning for our visions of adulthood, we must also be aware of the way in which Erikson describes the negative pole that, as a constant threat, opposes generativity. This negative term is called "stagnation"–a term and image that allude to the state of being inactive and of not growing. In this sense, psychological stagnation may be compared with economic states of "no growth" that, in modernity, are not considered healthy and stable. In modern economics, "no growth" really means decline. In this view, the only healthy state is progress. So if the negative pole in adulthood is described as stagnation, the normative vision of being adult is based on the idea of progress–permanent progress and steady improvement.

What, then, is the modern vision of the truly adult person? If we combine the philosophical with the psychological view, we arrive at the image of an individual who is autonomous, independent, and rational, and, moreover, is dynamically increasing in his or her capacities. The dual focus on love and work translates into a pattern of family life on the one hand and of a professional career on the other. And clearly, it is the life of a man that fits this pattern in the first place. Today, it is easy to see that this vision leads to a highly ideological and one-sided view of adulthood. Yet before critically examining this view in more detail, let us turn to the role of religion in modern adulthood.

What happens to *religion* within the modern view of adulthood? Does this view include a place for mature adult faith? Leaving the state of being a dependent minor in Kant's sense also means claiming one's freedom from all traditional authorities. Such authorities are seen as jeopardizing human autonomy in that they are not based on reason but on tradition. In this understanding, religion and, specifically, the church are considered as prime examples of institutions whose claims are not bound to rational argument but only to faithful adherence. So from the beginning, it is hard to reconcile

adulthood in the modern sense with church and religion. Religion is welcome where it supports rational autonomy, especially in the realm of ethics, but there clearly is no central place for religion in adulthood.

In the same vein, from a psychological and sociological point of view, religion becomes confined to the margins–it is limited to certain periods of the life cycle and to those areas of adult life that, for one reason or another, are not fully accessible to enlightenment. For the modern view of adulthood as it is incorporated in psychological models of the life cycle, religion is tied to the time *before* and *after* proper adulthood, that is, it is primarily identified with childhood and with old age. And even if religion is given a prominent place at the onset of adulthood–in adolescent development as it may also be found in Erikson's account of the life cycle[5]–it is only in such a way that religion may support the emergence of adulthood, but it is clearly not to define the meaning of adulthood. Rather, the location of religion in childhood and in old age goes along with a clear separation between secular life in public, which becomes the true arena of adult life, and religion as a private matter that is to be confined to one's heart and, possibly, is to be expressed in church as a private institution. According to this view, the church has its focus on children and on older people who have retired from working life, and it is addressing situations like illness and death, which are located on the fringes of modern rationality.

This observation leads to more general considerations concerning the role of religion and Christianity in modern society. Adulthood as the proper age and status of modern people has its prime location within the secular space of work and public life. The religion of the modern adult is a religion of inner personal feelings. It is accompanied by an ethics that may be motivated by a particular religion but that takes on a religiously neutral form. From a different perspective, one may also say that, with modernity, three different types of Christianity and religion have emerged: religion in the church, individual religion, and public religion, which often takes the form of civil religion, that is, of a religiously grounded morality that undergirds the public order but is not related to any particular religious community or tradition.[6] As we will see in the next section, these different types of religion also play a role in postmodernity.

Postmodern Challenges

The modern image of adulthood still plays an extremely powerful role in contemporary society, and many of us feel the hold that the image of becoming–and remaining–adults in the full sense of the

word actually has on our deep sense of direction in life. Yet at the same time, it has also become more than obvious that the idea of modern adulthood captured above is an ideology that can hardly be used as a basis for one's life. It is an ideology in that it never included the life perspectives of those who may not expect a career–women who take care of children and families, for example, or the sick and handicapped who are not able to perform according to the standards of modern production. All of them are excluded from the status of being proper modern adults, just like elderly people who, according to this understanding, lose the normative status of progressive autonomy. And to the degree that human beings can never be only autonomous, all of them fail to measure up to this notion of adulthood.

Moreover, the modern image of adulthood is an ideology in that the normative ideals of autonomy, independence, rationality, and ever-dynamic progress are self-contradictory and detrimental. This is true in at least two respects. First, the normative expectations contradict each other. For example, the economic idea of progress does not necessarily lead to more personal autonomy. Rather, the economic systems are claiming independence from personal control–they have turned into impersonal and objective powers that clearly limit the influence of individual persons. And second, the four ideals–autonomy, independence, rationality, and progress–are paradoxical in that it is impossible to maximize them without destroying their meaning. As we have come to understand today, maximum economic progress does not mean maximum wealth. Often it only means the destruction of the natural presuppositions of the economy. Similarly, maximum autonomy of the person does not mean maximum freedom. Rather, it only means the destruction of the social relationships that all personal life needs as its basis.

Another critical point that has been raised against the traditional idea of modern adulthood concerns the image of the ideal course of life as a linear curve. This curve rises up from childhood or adolescence to reach its peak in midadulthood in order to then decline, slowly and softly, into a well-cushioned retirement. Empirical studies starting in the 1960s and 1970s have clearly shown a different picture. Take, for example, Daniel Levinson's account *The Seasons of a Man's Life* published in 1978, which later, in the 1990s, was extended to include *The Seasons of a Woman's Life.*[7] The picture of the "developmental periods in early and middle adulthood" that Levinson offers definitely is not a curve–although it still contains the remnants of the ideology of progress in that it looks like steps leading the person to ever higher levels of achievement.[8] Yet it is quite noticeable, even in

this idealized picture, that the course of life is neither linear nor does it follow a steady movement in one or another direction. Rather, adulthood is now recognized as comprising many different crises and several turning points.

How would the picture look today if we ourselves would have to design one? I suppose there would not be many steps left. Rather, we would draw our lives with several lines simultaneously–different lines or strands that sometimes flow together but more often follow different directions: working life, private life, relationships, possibly memberships, spiritual journeys, and so forth. In sum, adulthood no longer is the time after the great transitional divide of adolescence. Adulthood itself now means transition–many transitions between different segments of a life cycle that no longer has a circular shape.

Beyond such general observations concerning the reality of the life cycle and its shape, there are a number of more concrete challenges for the modern idea of adulthood. In the following, I want briefly to take up four of them: the changing role of work, the crisis of marriage and family, the influence of the media, and the situation of religion. Let us first look at the role of work in adulthood.

For example, although it has not been so obvious in the United States, beginning in the 1990s adults in many countries around the world started suffering a deep threat to their status as modern adults because of unemployment. Because of globalization and the international competition that has taken hold of the labor market, many adults experience that paid work has become scarce and often is not attainable for them. Unemployment takes away one of the traditionally most important achievements of proper adulthood, especially for men but also for women–autonomy in the sense of financial independence. It means falling back into a very palpable form of dependence–having to rely on the resources of parents or relatives or on benefits from the state. In addition, unemployment, especially when it is prolonged, often means a severe breakdown of time perspectives and of the time management of the person, and this for everyday life as well as for the structuring of the personal future. Without paid work, there is no more defined schedule for daily life, and without work-related career perspectives, the future threatens to become pointless and empty. This is a critical and possibly devastating experience that many modern adults may go through at the point of retirement, when they leave their work lives behind. Now this experience may come as early as the beginning of adulthood itself–with so-called youth unemployment that really means the denial of access for young people wanting to join the work force.

As mentioned before, unemployment has not been a serious problem in the United States in the last decade, at least not on the surface. Yet American sociologists like Wade Clark Roof caution us not to perceive the situation and outlooks of younger Americans all too brightly. Roof observes:

> Young people face an uncertain economic future. Contrary to the widely held belief that youth is the best time of one's life, young people now constitute one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the entire population. As we have moved from an industrial to a post-industrial economy over the past several decades, young people have become disenfranchised. We have told youth that they need education, and they do, but the fact of the matter is that today's youth live in an educationally inflated world. Numerous jobs that once required only a high school education now require a university education, even though the jobs are virtually the same. We educate our children more than we did in the past, and still many youth only see for themselves rather dismal prospects for the future: part-time jobs, poor pay, and competition in a global economy where unpredictable market shifts directly affect opportunities.[9]

Roof is not interested here in what this means for the understanding of adulthood in the United States. Yet it is clear that not only unemployment but also the "dismal prospects" that he reports will have their effects on the identification of being a true adult and of being an active member of the workforce.

The next set of changes to be considered here concern what is often perceived as a far-reaching crisis of marriage and family. In chapter 1, we have already seen how much the forms of family life have changed over the last one hundred years and that, especially over the last thirty to forty years, divorce rates have increased dramatically. In the 1990s, the rate was up to more than 50 percent,[10] and there is no indication that the trend has reversed since. And the United States is not the only place where such tendencies can be observed. Rather, many countries in the Western world show a similar picture for marriage and family, most of all with increasing divorce rates, even if they are still somewhat lower than in the United States.[11]

This does not mean that marriage and family have ceased to play an important role in many people's lives. Yet their meaning is clearly changing. Living as an adult no longer means, at least in many cases, having entered a relationship with a spouse that, ideally, will

last for the rest of one's life. Instead, it has come to mean dealing with the changing and complex experience of, sometimes, several marriages and consecutive families, which has been called a patchwork or "postfamilial" life.[12] As pointed out previously (in chapter 2), this situation has far-reaching and often detrimental consequences for the children who are affected by it. In the present context of this chapter, we can come to see that it also affects the modern understanding of adulthood. Again, with the changes of marriage and family, adulthood turns out to have lost one of its main characteristics as a stable time of life. Just as with work and employment, adulthood has become a time of transitions and crises in this respect as well.

Next to work and unemployment and to marriage and family, another important experience affecting the status of adulthood has to do with the still growing influence of the media. According to media researchers like Neil Postman, the very distinction between childhood and adulthood has come into flux through the media. In his book *The Disappearance of Childhood,* Postman points out that the modern image of adulthood has a cultural background that is closely related to the media.[13] According to this view, the understanding of adulthood always changes when new media enter the picture. In support of this hypothesis, Postman first looks at the time when printed media became available on a mass basis (which actually took place during the time of the Reformation in Europe when the printing press was introduced). The dominant role that printed materials soon took in all fields of knowledge and information defined the adult as a person who had access to this kind of information. In this understanding, being adult meant being able to read and write. And through that, Postman says, the reading of printed information came to draw an information borderline between childhood and adulthood, which Postman sees as distinctive for the modern notion of adulthood because it is access to this information that characterizes the adult person.

During the second half of the twentieth century, with the enormously growing impact of media that focus on pictures and images rather than on the written word, this borderline begins to dissolve. Now everything is accessible to everyone, at all ages and at all times. For example, the secrets of adult knowledge concerning sexuality or violence no longer exist. Television brings it all to the home for whoever has two eyes through which the images can enter consciousness. According to Postman's hypothesis, the always present and accessible imagery of television melts down the distinction between adults and children, leaving behind a new hybrid that he

describes as the child-adult–a fusion of child and adult who, in front of the tube, may not be distinguished anymore.

Just as with other stages of the life cycle, the changes of adulthood also have implications for *religion.* The consequences that these changes bring about for religion are actually complex and ambivalent. In the remainder of this section, I will focus on two of these consequences because they seem to be of special interest for our understanding of adulthood: a reevaluation of secularization and understanding the public role of religion.

As mentioned before, one of the more hopeful signs of our time regarding the religious situation is the growing insight among many observers that secularization by no means defines the future of religion.[14] The "secular city" has not come–instead the city has become a meeting place of many different religions and of a variety of worldviews. In many countries around the world, the influence of traditional religious institutions like the church has decreased markedly and still seems to be on the decline. Yet at the same time, other forms of individual religion and a new interest in spirituality have increased. There is something like a spiritual hunger that was not expected by the modern prophets of secular society.

Our knowledge of the religion or spirituality of today's adults is limited. The available research certainly does not give us a full picture. Yet there is enough ground for a number of important hypotheses.[15]

- *First,* contemporary adults show a great deal of distance from the traditional church, especially in the sense of the mainline churches in the United States or their equivalents in Europe.[16] Even if a great majority of adults, according to their own statements, believe in God, they do not connect their personal faith with that of the church. "Everyone a special case" is the telling title of a recent study on religion in Switzerland.[17] Even this small country, which was the cradle of Reformed theology and a place deeply influenced by Protestant ethics, now has turned into a most variable landscape of religious plurality and of individualized religion.
- *Second,* as adulthood has become a more flexible stage of life, so have religious orientations during adulthood. Religious affiliation no longer is a stable or permanent characteristic that one needs to hold onto as part of one's adult identity. Instead, many adults are more or less actively pursuing their search for what might be meaningful for their lives. In this process, church

membership may be changed or dropped altogether. And there is little to no social pressure not to do so.

- *Third* and most interesting in our present context, issues related to the life cycle seem to be one of the main fields of enduring religious interest. How do I find a meaningful life? Do the various segments of my life cycle form a coherent whole? What will become of me after I die? These are some of the questions that seem to keep the process of the spiritual search in adulthood active.[18]

Taken together, these aspects of religion in adulthood once more confirm the understanding that contemporary religion is highly individualized, pluralized, and privatized, as it has often been described by the sociology of religion. Yet this is not the whole picture. As several observers have pointed out, religion may also take on a new public meaning that should not be overlooked.[19] Again, this perception has to do with the question of secularization.

The critical reevaluation of the idea of secularization also entails a new understanding of the public role that religion may have to play in the future. The neat separation between a secular public and private religion is rapidly losing its plausibility vis-à-vis the actual influence of religion on politics. A vivid example may be found in the environmental movements in many countries that, at least in part, are fired by religious motives, or, to mention a very different example, the conservative Christians in the United States. Clearly, in all such cases, politics and religion are not separate. In a similar vein, we may think of the growing feeling and awareness that we need a strong civil society if democracy is to have a future.[20] The megasystems of state and economy obviously are in no position to furnish the ethical basis or the sense of direction that are needed in personal as well as in social life. In this situation, religion–and Christianity in particular–may be considered as prime resources for giving meaning to life and for nurturing responsibility and care. According to the research of sociologists like Robert Wuthnow, Christianity actually does play an important role in fostering the ethical motives of community orientation and voluntarism in many fields.[21] Yet it is easy to see that not all forms of religion or Christian faith are likely to actually function in this way. Privatized religion that only operates within the individual person and that is focused exclusively on the individual life cycle will hardly be effective as a source for public solidarity.

The three different forms of Christianity that modernity has brought about and that I mentioned in the preceeding section–church, individual religion, and public or civil religion–have not ceased to exist in postmodernity. But in some ways the tensions among them have become stronger. A higher degree of individualization and pluralization has deepened the gap between individual religion and the church, and the religious plurality has made it harder to share enough convictions in order to maintain even a civil religion. At the same time, however, some of the clear-cut divisions also have become more flexible and permeable. I have already mentioned the public influence of religion opening up new connections between religion and the public realm that, from the point of view of modernity, was supposed to be secular. In addition to this, I could also mention the growing awareness within the church that there is a need for building bridges between the church as an institution and the personal and religious life of postmodern individuals.

With this in mind, we move on to the final section of this chapter, which deals with possible responses to the challenges of adulthood in postmodernity.

Practical Theology as Midwife for Postmodern Adulthood?

It is easy to see that, especially with adulthood, the postmodern challenges are by no means only detrimental. They may be detrimental from a modern point of view, but they include many healthy possibilities, and they provide a new openness at exactly those points where the modern life cycle tended to become suffocating. New chances seem to arise for a more humane shape of adult life, and these chances and possibilities also pertain to religion. It is liberating to learn that the extenuating expectation of all things becoming more and more secular may actually not hold true and that the future of religion may look much brighter than the prophets of secularization would have had us believe. Also, religious individualization and pluralization may not lead only to the much-criticized supermarket of religions. Rather, they may also mean that the many voices of people who do not conform to the image of modern adulthood may finally be heard. Actually, this is the reason why some theologians assume that there is a close connection between postmodernity and liberation theology.[22]

Yet the possibilities of the postmodern life cycle and of a more humane shape of adulthood will not be realized automatically. Many of the developments mentioned above refer to ambivalent and open processes, and this is why the work of church and theology is needed. To mention only the most obvious example: A strong civil society that is built on solidarity and mutual care will certainly not come

about by itself. There are too many counterforces operating in our culture of competition and violence, and there are also too many cases in which religion has not fostered solidarity and mutual care, but has turned into a source of hostility and conflict. So if a strong civil society is the aim, this requires many conscious and deliberate efforts–efforts of encouraging and directing people and of building up respective values and character traits, in childhood and adolescence, but also in adulthood.

In this process of encouraging and directing people, different images of adulthood will play an important role. Modernity's image of the rational and autonomous individual still is of considerable influence, serving as a model or ideal for the true direction of adult life. If this one-sided and distortive ideal is to lose its hold, different models and ideals are needed. This is why I will focus on *new images of faith* that can work in this direction. Given the insecure passage from modern to postmodern adulthood, such images should clearly support people in their search for more healthy and humane forms of life, which can be found in three directions:

- beyond the ideology of rationalism and progress
- beyond the individualism of isolated autonomy
- beyond the privatism of individualized religion

The first two directions refer to two main tendencies of modern culture, that is, rationalism and individualism. The third direction is focused on the religious aspects connected to them.

A critical view of rationalism, individualism, and religious privatism can count on being shared by many people today, within or without the church. Yet in all three respects, it is easier to say what has to be overcome and left behind than to describe clearly what should come afterward. What is to come after rationalism–relativism or even fundamentalism? What is to come after individualism–a new collectivism or even a tribalism of ethnic and cultural groups as many observers fear? And what is to come after religious privatism–a return to the earlier fusion of church and state?

In the remainder of this chapter, I will take up these three questions by looking for alternative images and guiding models for adulthood. It is clear from the beginning that, in doing so, the dangers that arise in the attempt to leave modern adulthood behind must be given due attention and be carefully avoided. And although I am interested in the contribution of church and theology (at the end of the chapter, I will suggest that practical theology should serve as a midwife for postmodern adulthood), the alternative images for guiding adult life cannot come from church and theology alone. Rather, they

will have to come from a cooperation between theology and other fields of knowledge and research. This is why I will draw on philosophical and social scientific models as well.

(1) In my understanding, one of the key images that can guide us in the passage toward responsible postrationalism is the image of *second naïveté* offered by the French-American philosopher Paul Ricoeur.[23] This naïveté refers to a life-cycle perspective by suggesting that childhood is the time of naïve beliefs and of uncritical acceptance of the stories and symbols that are offered to the child. With adolescence and adulthood, this naïveté is broken and is replaced by critical thinking in the sense of the Enlightenment, which considers this kind of thinking the ultimate achievement of human reason. Ricoeur, however, postulates that the development of human understanding should continue beyond the point of a critical destruction of earlier beliefs. It should arrive at a point or stage where it can reconstruct and in some sense reappropriate these beliefs.

This is where the idea of a second naïveté enters the picture. It stands for a return to nonrationalist worldviews and identities, for example, in symbol, narrative, and faith, which are appreciated anew. But while this second naïveté clearly transcends the limits of rationalism, the need for rational argument and for modern science and technology is also not denied. Rather, the achievements of modernity are given a new basis in a more comprehensive framework that allows rationality to play its role–a role that is necessary, yet definitely limited in that it may not define the aims of social or cultural development, nor may it be used as the ultimate norm of the human life cycle. Through this inclusion of rational argument and also through its self-conscious and self-reflexive character, this way of moving beyond rationalism avoids the pitfalls of relativism as well as of fundamentalism. We are not returning to premodernity. Rather, a second naïveté regrounds and reframes modernity, holding on to what deserves to be preserved of modernity while, at the same time, being clear about its limitations.

Ricoeur's philosophical image of a second naïveté is also helpful in restoring religion to its proper place in adulthood, and this is no coincidence. It is clearly in the Christian tradition where we may find the presuppositions on which Ricoeur's image draws. Most notably the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher coined the image of a *second childhood* in order to offer adults a post-Enlightenment idea of adult religion.[24] And here, with Schleiermacher, it becomes obvious that the image of a second naïveté and of a second childhood is a modern translation of the New Testament image of becoming "like children" (Mt. 18:3).

The perspective of becoming "like children" can also lead to a different attitude toward the ideology of growth, progress, and perfection. When this perspective is understood in the sense of the doctrine of justification by faith and grace rather than by our own achievements, it allows for a new openness toward the imperfect, incomplete, and even fragmentary character of our lives.[25] In this case, this theological view of the self assumes additional meaning. Earlier (in chapter 3) I pointed out that the appreciation of the fragmentary character of human selfhood can help us in dealing with the postmodern experience of a plural self by making us skeptical about the expectation of a unitary self. In the present context, the same skepticism applies to the expectation of a self that is defined by steady growth, self-perfection, and progressive achievement.

(2) The second direction that must be addressed in the transition to a more humane shape of adulthood concerns the move beyond individualism, which, in the modern view, is a close neighbor to rationality. Rationality is seen as the basis for individual autonomy and vice versa. So it is no less important to consider alternative models beyond individualism than in the case of rationalism.

From my point of view, there are two sources from which helpful images have come to us over the last few decades, from feminist psychology and ethics on the one hand and from the new appraisal of community structures on the other. While I will focus on "community" in the next section, the images from feminist psychology will be my first topic. Two powerful and important images from the work of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues can be mentioned here: *responsibility* and *connectedness*.[26] Both images describe an alternative understanding of maturity and adulthood. By pointing toward mature forms of being responsible for oneself, for others, as well as for nature, and by showing anew how maturity may not be adequately understood in terms of individual autonomy alone, they offer important alternatives to an individualistic understanding of human development.

Rather than identifying maturity with independence, they focus on the essentially relational character of human life and, consequently, the need for mature relationships that include both independence as well as dependence. While this alternative view of human development has been uncovered in the context of feminist psychology and of women's life situations, it also applies to men's lives and to their visions of becoming adults. And for both, men and women, the image of connectedness, which includes responsible relationships toward self and others, can be a powerful guide in overcoming the one-sided modern focus on the individual.

Beyond the psychological account of the need for connectedness described so far, this view has important roots in the biblical tradition. The relational character of human life can actually be called the true center of biblical anthropology, that is, of the understanding of what constitutes the human being according to the Bible.[27] From the beginning, the need for relationships is emphasized, including both the relationship to fellow humans (Gen. 2:18: "It is not good that the man should be alone") as well as the relationship to God. In this sense, the critical view of feminist psychology with its emphasis on connectedness has recovered, without making this explicit, a core Christian understanding upon which church and theology can now draw as a resource for the passage to postmodern adulthood.

Without being able to take up the complex question of how adulthood and the postmodern family should go together, I want at least to point out the possible link between the guiding idea of connectedness and what has been called the model of the "egalitarian family" by the Family, Religion, and Culture Project.[28] This type of family is recommended for the postmodern or postindustrial situation:

> Although we recognize that variations will exist, we argue that the new postindustrial ideal should be the egalitarian family in which husband and wife participate relatively equally in paid work as well as in childcare and other domestic responsibilities.[29]

This ideal can be considered as one concrete example for the potential of a more humane shape of adulthood affording both women and men with new possibilities.

(3) The third image that I want to take up here is the image of *community,* which is of special importance for a new vision of the church and for religion in adulthood. In the 1980s and 1990s, that term played an important role in the discussions about communitarianism as well as in Christian ethics.[30] It is not possible here to deal with the corresponding philosophical and ethical debates. Suffice it to say, at least for the present context, that neither an understanding of the church as a more or less closed community is enough, nor does it make sense to refuse the idea of community altogether in order to work toward a purely universalist ethics like, for example, the well-known discourse ethics of Jürgen Habermas.[31] The universalist view has no real place for special communities because such communities are seen as potentially divisive. At the same time, this negative understanding of community is a decisive weakness of any universalist ethics. In its negativity toward community structures, it tends toward an abstract individualism, and, for church

or religion, it leads to religious privatism because the public sphere is envisioned as purely secular.

Yet to see the church only as a community unto itself, which is not concerned with the wider society and even less with its global environment, also amounts to a reductionist view. The gospel, on which the church must ultimately rest, does not support this kind of self-enclosure. Rather, it is public in the sense that it is addressed to all people and that its views of the human being as well as of society hold important ethical implications that are not limited to the church.[32]

The perspective for a future beyond religious individualism and privatism requires a vision for church and religion that is limited neither to abstract universalism nor to a self-enclosed community. A community that thinks only of itself and that cares only for its members clearly contradicts the self-understanding of the Christian faith, which extends love and care even to the enemy. In this sense, I want to call the church a *public community.* It is a community based on a shared faith. But it is also a community that addresses the public and that works toward the common good. From a different perspective, it has been called a "public church," a designation that also points out the public nature of the church.[33]

The modern notion of adulthood is premised on the clear division between church, private religion, and public responsibility. At the beginning of this new century, it has become obvious that this division no longer fits the needs of personal and social life. Rather, it creates many problems: for the future of democracy and civil society, which is in need of moral and religious support; for the individual person whose life becomes empty and shallow if all questions of meaning and truth are confined to the inner world of feelings; and also for the church, which cannot fulfill its mission if it is separated from the personal as well as from the public domain.

To the degree that the contemporary experiences of postmodern life allow for overcoming the division between church, individual, and public religion, they may turn out to be beneficial. This statement does not stand for an undue optimism. Rather, it points toward the task of a practical theology that positions itself at the point of transition between modernity and postmodernity and that has to offer guiding images for the future–images of community and responsibility, of connectedness, and of a second naïveté, not only for individual religion or for a secular public but for the sake of a new type of public religious presence.

CHAPTER 6

Between Adulthood and Old Age

The Question of a "Third Age"

Although my main emphasis in this study is on those stages that sometimes are summarized metaphorically as the first two thirds of the life cycle, that is, the span from childhood to adulthood, we would be clearly mistaken to assume that changes are only happening during those times in life. It is true that the changes affecting childhood and adolescence have received much more attention in the past than those in adulthood or old age. Even a developmental psychology of adulthood is a fairly recent phenomenon, entering the picture only forty to fifty years ago.[1] Before then, most psychologists took for granted that development comes to its end with the transition from adolescence to adulthood as the time of maturity. Yet as I have tried to show in the preceding chapter in respect to images of faith and adulthood, the adult stage of the life cycle can include many major developmental (sub)stages, and this has become generally accepted in the psychology of religion as well.[2] But only recently has it become more common to also include a special focus on religion in old age.

With this background in mind, it is easy to understand why a chapter on old age was not part of my original plan for this book. My earlier work on childhood, adolescence, and adulthood had led me to believe that the most important changes to be addressed in this study would certainly be found in the early stages of the life cycle.[3] Those who attended my lectures on such topics, however, soon made me aware of the need to carry my analysis of the changing shape of

Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy, ed. Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick, 2d ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1989), 191–208.

[28]Kenniston, *Young Radicals.*

[29]Fowler, *Stages of Faith*; idem, *Becoming Adult Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); idem, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 68–71.

[30]Evelyn Eaton Whitehead and James D. Whitehead, *Christian Life Patterns: The Psychological Challenges and Religious Invitations of Adult Life* (Garden City: Image, 1979), 63–118.

[31]Sharon Parks, *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), xii.

[32]See Parks, *Critical Years,* 133–76.

[33]For a good beginning, see Harley Atkinson, ed., *Handbook of Young Adult Religious Education* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1995); see also Norbert Copray, *Jung und trotzdem erwachsen,* 2 vols. (Düsseldorf: 1987–1988).

[34]Aylmer, "Launching"; Whitehead and Whitehead, *Christian Life Patterns.*

[35]V. Bailey Gillespie, *The Experience of Faith* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1988), 175–92, speaks of "Reordered Faith" in this context; see also Parks, *Critical Years.*

Chapter 5: Church, Individual Religion, Public Responsibility

[1]Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: 'Was ist Aufklärung?'" in *Werke,* vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1964), 51–61. The famous opening passage is: "*Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit* ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. *Selbstverschuldet* ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Mut dich deines *eigenen* Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung."

[2]See the discussions in Neil J. Smelser and Erik H. Erikson, eds., *Themes of Work and Love in Adulthood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

[3]See Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1950, 1963); idem, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968); idem, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964); also see the chapters on Erikson in my books: Friedrich Schweitzer, *Identität und Religion. Religiöse Entwicklung und Erziehung im Kindes- und Jugendalter* (Munich: Kaiser, 1987).

[4]Erik H. Erikson, "On the Generational Cycle: An Address," in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 61 (1980): 213–23.

[5]Most clearly in Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1958).

[6]Dietrich Rössler, *Grundriß der Praktischen Theologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986).

[7]Daniel J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1978); idem, *The Seasons of a Woman's Life* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

[8]Levinson, *Man's Life,* 57.

[9]Wade Clark Roof, "At-Risk Youth," in *At-Risk Youth, At-Risk Church: What Jesus Christ and American Teenagers Are Saying to the Mainline Church. The 1997 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture* (Princeton: Institute for Youth Ministry, 1998), 86.

[10]Don S. Browning et al., *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate* (Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press, 1997), 52.

[11]For Germany for example, see Rosemarie Nave-Herz, *Familie heute: Wandel der Familienstrukturen und Folgen für die Erziehung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 199); Deutscher Bundestag, ed., *Zehnter Kinder- und Jugendbericht vom 25.8.1998* (Bonn: Deutscher Bundestag, 1998).

[12]Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Was kommt nach der Familie? Einblicke in neue Lebensformen* (Munich: Beck, 1998).

[13]Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Delacorte, 1982).

[14]As mentioned in chapter 1, the work of Harvey Cox is especially indicative of such developments.

[15]For my own views, see Wolfgang Lück and Friedrich Schweitzer, *Religiöse Bildung Erwachsener. Grundlagen und Impulse für die Praxis* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1999).

[16]Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1987).

[17]Alfred Dubach and Roland J. Campiche, eds., *Jede(r) ein Sonderfall? Religion in der Schweiz. Ergebnisse einer Repräsentativbefragung* (Zürich: NZN-Buchverlag, F. Reinhardt, 1993).

[18]For additional references, see Lück and Schweitzer, *Religiöse Bildung Erwachsener.*

[19]Cf. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994); Peter Beyer, *Religion und Globalization* (London: Sage, 1994).

[20]From this discussion, see Parker J. Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992); Michael Walzer, ed., *Toward a Global Civil Society* (Providence: Berghahn, 1995).

[21]Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society: The Contemporary Debate* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1996).

[22]See, for example, the discussions in Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes van der Ven, eds., *Practical Theology–International Perspectives* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1999); Marcel Viau, James Poling, and Friedrich Schweitzer, "Perspectives on Practical Theologies and Methodologies," in *Globalization and Difference: Practical Theology in a World Context,* ed. Paul Ballard and Pamela Couture (Cardiff: Academic Press, 1999), 193–212.

[23]Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

[24]Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Die Weihnachtsfeier. Ein Gespräch* (Halle: Schimmelpfennig, 1806).

[25]Henning Luther, *Religion und Alltag. Bausteine zu einer Praktischen Theologie des Subjekts* (Stuttgart: Radius, 1992), 160–83.

[26]Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982); Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

[27]See the major accounts: Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985); Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Kaiser, 1973).

[28]Browning et al., *Culture Wars.*

[29]Browning et al., *Culture Wars,* 1.

[30]See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1981). For a helpful introduction, see Micha Brumlik and Hauke Brunkhorst, eds., *Gemeinschaft und Gerechtigkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993).

[31]Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communication Action,* 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 1987). For a theological discussion, see Don S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, eds., *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

[32]For theological discussions and visions of the church, see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution of Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977); Eilert Herms, *Kirche für die Welt. Lage und Aufgabe der evangelischen Kirche im vereinigten Deutschland* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995); Michael Welker, *Kirche im Pluralismus* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995); Wolfgang Huber, *Kirche in der Zeitenwende. Gesellschaftlicher Wandel und Erneuerung der Kirche* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 1998).

[33]See James W. Fowler, *Weaving the New Creation: Stages of Faith and the Public Church* (San Francisco: Harper 1991); idem, *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public*

Challenges of Postmodern Life (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996); see also Jack L. Seymour et al., *The Church in the Education of the Public: Refocusing the Task of Religious Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984).

Chapter 6: Between Adulthood and Old Age

[1]Erik H. Erikson must be honored for one the earliest ventures into this field of adult developmental psychology; see his *Childhood and Society*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1950), esp. the seminal chapter on the "Eight Ages of Man."

[2]One of the clearest examples still is James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

[3]See my books: Friedrich Schweitzer, *Lebensgeschichte und Religion. Religiöse Entwicklung und Erziehung im Kindes- und Jugendalter* (Munich: Kaiser, 1987); idem, *Die Religion des Kindes. Zur Problemgeschichte einer religionspädagogischen Grundfrage* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1992); idem, *Die Suche nach eigenem Glauben. Einführung in die Religionspädagogik des Jugendalters* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996); Wolfgang Lück and Friedrich Schweitzer, *Religiöse Bildung Erwachsener. Grundlagen und Impulse für die Praxis* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999).

[4]Peter Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life: The Emergence of the Third Age* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989).

[5]See the discussions in Martina Blasberg-Kuhnke, *Gerontologie und Praktische Theologie. Studien zu einer Neuorientierung der Altenpastoral an der psychischen und gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit des alten Menschen* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1985); K. Brynolf Lyon, *Toward a Practical Theology of Aging* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Melvin A. Kimble et al., eds., *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion: A Handbook* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

[6]This concern is as widespread in the political discussions as in the academic literature; for a recent statement, see Beverly Goldberg, *Age Works: What Corporate America Must Do to Survive the Graying of the Workforce* (New York: The Free Press, 2000).

[7]For a summary, see Laslett, *Fresh Map*; Paul Johnson and Pat Thane, eds., *Old Age from Antiquity to Post-Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[8]Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2d ed. (New York: Norton, 1963), 268.

[9]Ibid.

[10]See Johnson and Thane, *Old Age*; Peter Borscheid, "Der alte Mensch in der Vergangenheit," in *Alter und Altern: Ein interdisziplinärer Studientext zur Gerontologie*, ed. Paul B. Baltes et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 35–61.

[11]See Gerald J. Gruman, "Cultural Origins of Present-Day 'Age-ism': The Modernization of the Life Cycle," in *Aging and the Elderly: Humanistic Perspectives in Gerontology*, ed. Stuart F. Spicker et al. (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1978), 359–87.

[12]See Laslett, *Fresh Map*; Baltes et al., *Alter und Altern*; Johnson and Thane, *Old Age*.

[13]Goldberg, *Age Works*.

[14]See Laslett, *Fresh Map*, 65.

[15]Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2d ed., 268.

[16]Erik H. Erikson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968), 140.

[17]Erikson, *Identity*, 141.

[18]See Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1987); for examples from Germany, see Joachim Matthes, ed., *Kirchenmitgliedschaft im Wandel: Untersuchungen zur Realität der Volkskirche. Beiträge zur zweiten EKD-Umfrage "Was wird aus der Kirche?"* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1990).

[19]See Blasberg-Kuhnke, *Gerontologie und Praktische Theologie*; Lyon, *Practical Theology of Aging*.

[20]See the discussion by Blasberg-Kuhnke, *Gerontologie und Praktische Theologie*.

[21]For a good overview, see Deutsches Jugendinstitut, ed., *Wie geht's der Familie? Ein Handbuch zur Situation der Familien heute* (Munich: Kösel, 1988).

[22]Laslett, *Fresh Map*, 4.

[23]See Karl Ulrich Mayer and Paul B. Baltes, eds., *Die Berliner Altersstudie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999); see also Baltes and Mittelstraß, op. cit.

[24]See the overviews in the following: Kimble et al., eds., *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion*; Harold G. Koenig, *Aging and God: Spiritual Pathways to Mental Health in Midlife and Later Years* (New York: Harworth Pastoral Press, 1994); Marianne Habersetzer, *Leben und Glauben–ein katechetischer Weg mit älteren Menschen* (Würzburg: Echter, 1998); Ulrich Moser, *Identität, Spiritualität und Lebenssinn. Grundlagen seelsorgerlicher Begleitung im Altenheim* (Würzburg: Echter, 2000).

[25]See the beginning of this chapter.

[26]Koenig, *Aging and God*.

[27]Koenig, *Aging and God*, 284–94.

[28]See statements earlier in this chapter from the works of Martina Blasberg-Kuhnke (notes 5 and 20).

[29]See Alfons Auer, *Geglücktes Altern. Eine theologisch-ethische Ermutigung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 109.

[30]Daniel Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 97.

[31]The now classic study is Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975); see also Joachim Wittkowski, *Psychologie des Todes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990).

[32]Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

Chapter 7: Theological Demands on Postmodern Life

[1]The major exception in Germany is Albrecht Grözinger, *Die Kirche–ist sie noch zu retten? Anstiftungen für das Christentum in postmoderner Gesellschaft* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998); for an overview on the German literature, see Wolfgang Steck, *Praktische Theologie. Horizonte der Religion, Konturen des neuzeitlichen Christentums, Strukturen der religiösen Lebenswelt*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 209ff.

[2]See Walter Brueggemann, *Texts under Negotation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); or the collections: David Ray Griffin, William A. Beardslee, and Joe Holland, *Varieties of Postmodern Theology* (Albany, N.Y.: State Univ. of New York Press, 1989); Terrence W. Tilley, ed., *Postmodern Theologies: The Challenge of Religious Diversity* (New York: Maryknoll, 1995). To mention a few additional examples from Germany: Bernd Beuscher, *Positives Paradox. Entwurf einer neostrukturalistischen Religionspädagogik* (Vienna: Passagen, 1993); Hermann Kochanek, ed., *Religion und Glaube in der Postmoderne* (Nettetal: Steyler, 1996).

[3]David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* (Weinheim: VCH, 1988).

[4]Werner Helsper, "Das 'postmoderne Selbst'–ein neuer Subjekt- und Jugendmythos? Reflexionen anhand religiöser jugendlicher Orientierungen," in *Identitätsarbeit heute. Klassische und aktuelle Perspektiven der Identitätsforschung*, ed. Heiner Keupp and Renate Höfer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 174–206.

[5]See my earlier books: Friedrich Schweitzer, *Lebensgeschichte und Religion. Religiöse Entwicklung und Erziehung im Kindes- und Jugendalter* (Munich: Kaiser, 1987); idem, *Die Suche nach eigenem Glauben. Einführung in die Religionspädagogik des Jugendalters* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996); idem, *Das Recht des Kindes auf Religion* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000).

[6]Donald Capps, *Pastoral Care: A Thematic Approach* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979); John J. Gleason, *Growing Up to God: Eight Steps in Religious Development* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975); Joachim Scharfenberg, *Einführung in die Pastoralpsychologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985).

[7]For a discussion, see Wilhelm Gräb, *Lebensgeschichten, Lebensentwürfe, Sinndeutungen. Eine Praktische Theologie gelebter Religion* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998).