



Christian Psychology Around The World

THE EMCAPP JOURNAL

22 / 2024

**The Importance of the Holy Spirit
in Theory and Practice
for Christian Psychology**

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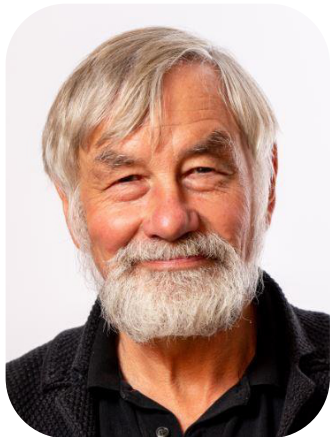
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editorial

In the 1990s, the scientific director of the IGNIS Academy, Peter Hübner (†2003), wrote: “One must go somewhat deeper into the connection between science and view of the world, between psychology and view of man. Every science, but especially every science of man, is developed on the basis of a certain fundamental worldview, is incomprehensible without the view of man which provides its orientation. These connections are not always clear to the observer of scientific results and discoveries, very often because the worldview behind it is presupposed as a generally accepted, self-evident truth. It is therefore more honest and sincere to start straightaway by specifying the worldview to which one is committed in the title of the science. ‘Christian Psychology’ therefore simply reflects the admission that we, as Christians, need a psychology that is embedded from the beginning in the Christian understanding of man and the world, in theory and practice.”

But Christian psychology is not only to be understood on the basis of its view of the world and man and its understanding of science, but above all by the living presence of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Not only do rules intrinsic to creation come into operation in an applied Christian psychology, but a living person - the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient trinitarian God, again and again intervenes in this world, moved by infinite love. He is present through the Holy Spirit in and with us. "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7)



I invite you now to read in this actual eJournal more about the importance of this Holy Spirit in theory and practice for Christian Psychology

Yours, Werner May
emcapp.eu
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Why do we have a bilingual journal?

In our movement for Christian Psychology, we meet as Christians with very different backgrounds: different churches, different cultures, different professional trainings...

There is a common desire for the movement, but highly “multi-lingual” ideas of its realization! Therefore, a bilingual journal is just a small reference to our multilingual voices to remind us:

Languages are an expression of cultures, countries and of their people. By writing in two languages, we want to show our respect to the authors of the articles, to their origin and heritage, and at the same time symbolically show respect to all the readers in other foreign countries.

There are many foreign languages that we do not understand. Within our own language, we intend to understand one another, but we fail to do so quite often. To really understand one another is a great challenge, and we also want to point to this challenge by offering a bilingual journal.

“When languages die, knowledge about life gets lost.” (Suzanne Romaine, 2011)

Finally, there is a pragmatic reason: As we want to have authors from one special country to write the main articles of every journal, it will be easier for them to distribute the journal in their own country, when it also is in their own language.

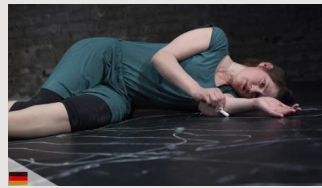
Note: By clicking the desired contribution in this Contents list, you immediately reach the relevant page.

the first 20 numbers

of the eJournal Christian Psychology Around The World



JOURNAL NO. 1 - 2012
Poland



JOURNAL NO. 2 - 2012
Germany



JOURNAL NO. 3 - 2013
Russia



JOURNAL NO. 4 - 2013
Switzerland



JOURNAL NO. 5 - 2014
USA



JOURNAL NO. 6 - 2015
Finland



JOURNAL NO. 7 - 2015
Canada



JOURNAL NO. 8 - 2016
South Africa



JOURNAL NO. 9 - 2016
Focus Topic: „Therapy Goals“



JOURNAL NO. 10 - 2017
„Conscience“



JOURNAL NO. 11 - 2018
„Who is leading me during practicing
Christian Psychology?“



JOURNAL NO. 12 - 2019
„Christian identity“



JOURNAL NO. 13 - 2019
Body Aspects in Christian Psychology, Psychotherapy and Counseling



JOURNAL NO. 14 - 2020
„Coping with Stress in Theory and Practice of Christian Psychology“



JOURNAL NO. 15 - 2020
„Basic trust and secure attachment - Christian anthropological, educational and psychotherapeutic aspects.“



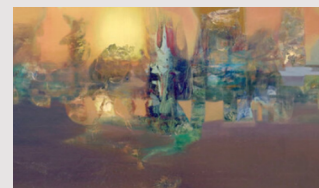
JOURNAL NO. 16 - 2021
„A Christian Perspective on the True Self and False Self“



JOURNAL NO. 17 - 2022
„Situating Grief in Redemptive History for the Sake of Joy“



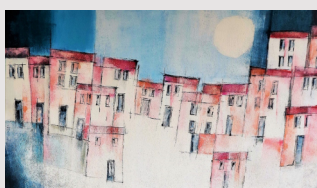
JOURNAL NO. 18 - 2022
„Ways out of the Shame-Fear Cycle“



JOURNAL NO. 19 - 2023
„Spiritual Formation“



JOURNAL NO. 20 - 2023
„Christian faith in everyday life“



JOURNAL NO. 21 - 2024
„Love in different dimensions“

The EMCAPP Journal “The Christian Psychology Around the World” is published in Germany, the main editor is Werner May. Since 2011 the internet bilingual Journal is published two times a year. The authors of articles and comments are psychologists, psychotherapists and scientists from different countries of the world. This journal is published by the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy in cooperation with the IGNIS-Akademie für Christliche Psychologie.

about the artist

Artist Statement

Thank you very much Esly, for your readiness and your paintings – and for this short interview.

You are a psychologist, mother, husband, painter,... What would you say to someone who is sitting next to you on the plane, for example, and asks what you are doing - in a few sentences?

Although I am not trained in Art Therapy, I see art as therapy. Since I was a child, I have loved to paint. And one of the interesting things about painting is that we can do whatever we want with colors and shapes. They can reflect our moods and help us express what is inside in a way that words cannot. Now I have learned a little bit about applying some of the techniques of neurographica (Pavel Piskovev – have to check the selling on this) and adapted them to my abstract paintings, like rounding out where the lines cross to make them look like nerve cells. It is surprisingly relaxing. I guess we are painting in “brain language” when we do that. And I took it a step further, and started using this new way of painting to Bible verses that I love.



Esly Carvalho (Brazil)

Ph.D., T.E.P. TraumaClinic. She is an experienced Trainer of Trainers in EMDR therapy, as well as a Psychodrama trainer. An author and international speaker, she has spent her life working in Latin America and Brazil, training in three languages, in both pastoral as well as clinical settings. She has written books available on Amazon. Esly is married to a retired missionary, has an adult married daughter who is also a clinical psychologist and trainer in her own right, and loves those grandchildren!!

www.plazacounselingservices.com
www.traumaclinicinternational.com

Former contribution in our eJournal by Esly you can see her:

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/18/#p=46>
<https://emcapp.ignis.de/21/#p=91>

Are you trying to penetrate all these aspects of your identity with the Christian faith? How do you manage that? What are your experiences with it?

I have always loved the Bible. I grew up in the US, where Protestants were keen on learning to read in order to read the Scriptures. I memorized verses in Sunda School, and then I returned to Brazil, where I was born, and where until Vatican II, the Bible was forbidden reading to Catholics. So I am using this art form to express Bible verses, something I never did before. I love the Psalms and the stories of Jesus, as well as the stories from the Old testament.

Would you like to add something about your Christian identity?

I am a sixth-generation Protestant in the largest Catholic country in the world. Several generations of my family were considered 'heretics' and my grandfather was even disinherited by his Italian Catholic mother for having married a Protestant. I understood early in life that being a Christian had a price tag.

On the flip side, I am part of a generation of Crypto-Jews who had had to hide their identity for 500 years in church. My maternal grandmother still killed chickens the kosher way. So Jewish love of Torah is in my very blood. Not even

ryone understands or wonders how I can put this together... but it comes down to the love of Scripture.

About your paintings: How you developed this? What meaning does this have for you?

I started painting as a child. Although I had a few lessons, I was in the youngster class where they didn't teach us techniques and it got boring, so I quit. From there I pretty much am self-taught. I love gouache, and now I have discovered watercolor pencils. When I was in the University, painting helped me stay lucid. It has always given me pleasure, but it was also my therapy that kept me sane. It didn't matter that painting "didn't make sense". My soul understood and that was enough. I spent 20 years without picking up a paintbrush, and a friend did a session with me that totally unblocked my creativity. From then I have kept painting, but the style changes from time to time. I love bright colors and abstracts. I was never really able to draw much at all, just paint. And like painting, my life has been "outsaid the lines" of commonality. I've done things differently than was expected of me at times, and like the energy of the bright colors, I ploughed through the challenges. Amazingly, beautiful structures came out of it. Painting is healing. It heals the soul that can't talk.



Alignment with the Lord's will

#sly 3



We three Kings...

July 2021





Articles on the main topic

**„The Importance of the Holy Spirit
in Theory and Practice
for Christian Psychology“**



Laurie A. Tone (USA)

Laurie A. Tone Ph.D., LPC-AZ; LMFT, LMHC-FL

Laurie serves as an adjunct professor of counseling and a practicum/internship evaluator at a Christian University in Phoenix, Arizona. Laurie, her husband and children served for many years as missionaries in Latin America and Florida. She has extensive experience in cross-cultural counseling. Areas of specialization include member care of cross-cultural workers and counseling approaches that include physical, emotional and spiritual integration. Laurie and her husband serve in various ministry endeavors in their local church. They are blessed parents of two grown daughters, a son-in-law, and this year have welcomed their first grandchild.

Former contributions in our eJournal by Johannes you can see her:

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/14/#p=170>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/#p=112>

You will be Called Repairer of Broken Walls:

A Reflection for Christian Counselors

Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings (Isaiah 58:12)

Broken Walls. We've all seen them and if we stop to ponder, we might ask what happened? Why is this wall broken down? The Bible makes many references to walls. We have the example of the wall of Jerusalem, the walls of Jericho, references to the watchmen on the wall. The book of Proverbs says that a person who lacks self-control is like a city whose walls are broken down (Proverbs 25:28). The imagery of a broken wall around a city does little for a modern day reader. When we think of cities, we rarely think in terms of walls. But when ancient cities were built, the walls around them were built first. Walls were an integral part of the city's identity and character. The walls provided protection; territories were marked and boundaries were in place. Cities without walls were defenseless and vulnerable to enemy attacks. It was a disgrace to have a city's walls in disrepair. If walls are a sort of boundary then broken down walls might be analogous to broken

down lives. Similar to the walls in biblical times, lives without walls, borders or boundaries are chaotic, left defenseless, with no identity and subject to enemy attacks. From a counselor's perspective we often find those who seek services come with broken down walls. Some lack identity, have poor boundaries or they feel their lives lie in ruins and rubble. Scripture offers a glimpse of the role of a counselor called to walk alongside another and help rebuild the walls, help bring order to the chaos, hope to the hurting, and restoration to the brokenness.

Lessons from the Book of Nehemiah

Rebuilding broken down walls brings to mind to the book of Nehemiah who was famous for rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem. Nehemiah's steps to rebuilding the wall was not an overnight project. In fact, before he began he took several critical steps we can learn from.

Nehemiah's first response to the broken walls of Jerusalem was to weep, and mourn and seek the Lord in prayer and fasting. He recognized not only the disgrace, but that rebuilding the wall was not a human undertaking. It would require the help of the Lord. God is the Author of Hope and the God of the impossible. He is the God who restores brokenness.

When a Christian counselor is faced with a client whose walls are broken down or whose life seems a pile of rubble, the first place to go is prayer. From Nehemiah's model of prayer, we can glean important concepts of prayer. Rather than start with prayer for the client, the first area of prayer should be for the counselor. The counselor is dependent on the Holy Spirit, the Wonderful Counselor, the Healer, Comforter and the One to impart wisdom and discernment, and the true Agent of Change. Many clients will be, in a sense, like those Nehemiah encountered, they have "survived the exile", they are survivors. They have managed to reach out for help and now they are in need of restoration. In some cases, the client may even feel like Israel, exiled from God. The counselor can be instrumental in helping restore this fundamental relationship.

Prayer and Repentance

After declaring the awesomeness of God, and imploring His attention to the plight of His people, Nehemiah asked forgiveness for sin. He included himself in this confession. It was not a top down prayer. He was convicted of his part in this collective sin and disgrace. This is also true of Christian counselors. Counselors recognize that coming alongside another is not a top down approach but a collaborative one. Counselors are also broken and need a Savior. The best a counselor can do is declare dependence on the Lord and point to the One who restores brokenness. The second area of prayer is for the client. While counselors must respect the religious preferences of a client and not impose his or her beliefs, there is nothing stopping a Christian counselor from praying for the client in their personal prayer time. Prayer offered on behalf of the client can be a powerful tool. Prayer prepares the client's heart to receive

healing and opens the way for the power of God in the therapeutic relationship. While it is unlikely the counselor will pray, fast and mourn for a client with the same intensity or passion as Nehemiah, it does provide a model of what to do in the face of brokenness.

The Character of the Counselor

The counselor must be a trustworthy person. The character of Nehemiah is one to emulate. Nehemiah was "cupbearer to the King" (Nehemiah 1:11), which meant he was trusted to test everything the King was to drink. This place of honor and trust allowed Nehemiah access to the King, which was in essence the catalyst to the rebuilding process. As Christian counselors we also have access to the King of Kings and being trustworthy is foundational to the counseling relationship.

Surveying the Damage

Before Nehemiah designed a strategy for rebuilding, he surveyed the extent of the damage. We see Nehemiah quietly, without fan-fare inspect the broken down walls. The counselor should also quietly, with great discretion, survey the damage of the broken life. What is the extent of the damage? How deeply is this person affected? Why are the walls broken down in this person's life? What might prevent the rebuilding process? Is there unconfessed sin, bitterness, unforgiveness, or anger? Is there unspoken or unresolved trauma? Is the presenting problem really the key issue? This requires prayer, discernment, wisdom, and skills in intake and assessment processes. In carefully surveying the damage the counselor can begin to formulate a game plan and assess what needs to be done to help begin the rebuilding process.

What About All the Rubble?

"The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." (Nehemiah 4:10). Many cities in biblical times were built one on top of another called tells. In modern times walls are not built from the ground up but from below the ground. What is seen above ground is not the

whole picture. It is what is below the surface that can provide true stability. But building a strong foundation takes time. Before building a physical wall the land must be first cleared of all debris, leveled, a trench dug and a foundation laid. This is true in rebuilding the broken walls of a life as well. The rubble above and below the surface may hinder the rebuilding. Perhaps some of what looks like rubble can be cleansed, polished and restored, other times the rubble is just that -rubble. But what is under the rubble? Is there a past history much like the tells of biblical times, a city built upon a city. This past, if not addressed in counseling, may impede rebuilding? Are there unseen roots that can grow up and eventually split a newly rebuilt wall? Wayward roots can break through walls a foot thick. In building new walls, roots of bitterness, division, dissension, anger, strife, and unforgiveness must be cleared from the territory we are aiming to rebuild. Scripture teaches us to build our lives with imperishable things (I Corinthians 3:10-15). We should not build with wood, hay or stubble but with costly stones and gems. The rebuilding process of a broken life requires a strong foundation built with eternal values in mind.

Have a Plan

Nehemiah had a plan. He used his gifts of administration and leadership and had strategies to accomplish the task. The most vulnerable part of the ancient city was the gate and Nehemiah started by rebuilding the gates or the doors of the city. Counselors can also start by strengthening the most exposed or vulnerable areas. Like Nehemiah, counselors also have spiritual gifts, learned skills, and a plan along with a myriad of tools or interventions. Treatment plans are designed with specific steps and measurable outcomes. In Nehemiah's strategy once each gate was completed, it was dedicated to the Lord (Nehemiah 3:1-3). Counselors and clients can also celebrate each step of progress as they continue rebuilding.

Come "Let Us" Rebuild the Walls

Nehemiah recognized rebuilding the walls was a team effort. He declared, "Come let us re-

build the walls of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace" (Nehemiah 2:17). "Let us rebuild" offers hope and encouragement to one who for the present only sees the rubble. The words "Let us" convey to the client a sense of belonging. When the "Us" includes the Lord, it adds a divine dimension to the rebuilding process. If appropriate and permission granted counselors may also work in conjunction with other professionals in a multidisciplinary approach. Friends, family and church resources may also be involved in the healing process. In fact, Nehemiah used this as a strategy and posted families together (Nehemiah 4:13) and the laborers used one hand to fight the enemy, and the other to build the wall (Nehemiah 4: 5-18). There is power and healing in community.

Watch for Opposition

Nehemiah faced opposition. We see in Nehemiah 4:7 he faced opposition from the north (Sanballat), south (the Arabs), east (Tobias the Ammorite) and west (The men of Ashdod). The client may also face opposition from all sides. The opposition may come from outside sources; family members, friends, co-workers, or others, not allowing the client the appropriate growth or change. The opposition may come from within. Many clients self-sabotage, relapse, go back to their perpetrator, live in cycles of sin, confess, repent, sin again. For some, it seems easier to live amidst the ruins than it is to begin the painful process of change. The opposition may also be spiritual. Satan is a deceiver and loves to see Christians live defeated, powerless lives. In Nehemiah 4:2, we read of the taunts of the enemy, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they rebuild the wall? Clients can also suffer taunts and doubts and have self-defeating, self-deprecating thoughts.

Post a Guard

In Nehemiah 4:9, we see a guard was placed to protect the wall as it was being rebuilt. This is a spiritual concept that should be considered. Both during the rebuilding and once a wall is erected the work must be guarded and protec-

ted. There are too many forces bent on destruction that can cause weakening in the structure. Entropy sets in and the normal wear and tear of life can cause erosion. Walls must be intact to be purposeful. Weak, fragile walls must be reinforced with prayer and a holy life. Maintenance is important to every structure whether physical or spiritual. We can glean wisdom from the life of the sluggard. Proverbs 24:30-34 reads,

“ I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest- and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”

Rebuilding walls is not a one-time event but a life-time pursuit. Walls cannot be abandoned or expect to stand unchallenged. The enemies on all sides wait crouching, looking for a weakness, an unfortified area to gain entrance once again. These can be habits, sins, lifestyle choices, attitudes and spiritual opposition. The walls must be posted with a guard. The lover of our souls offers such a protection He is willing to stand guard over our hearts and souls. Nehemiah exhorts the people in the midst of the battle to remember the Lord (Nehemiah 4:14).

Rebuilding Should Take Place to A Certain Point

In Nehemiah 4:6, we see that Nehemiah and his team built the wall to a certain height and with Counseling should reflect this as well. Counseling is not a life -long relationship and counselors are trained to think about successful closure early in the process. No counselor wants a client dependent on them. Clients need to take ownership of their own rebuilding and maintenance. Ethics codes prohibit keeping a client longer than is necessary. Once goals are met, discharge is in store. Counselors in essence want to work themselves out of a job and teach clients the tools they need to live and succeed outside of sessions. However, the Holy Spirit continues the work in the ever-growing process of sanctification and growth.

Finishing Well

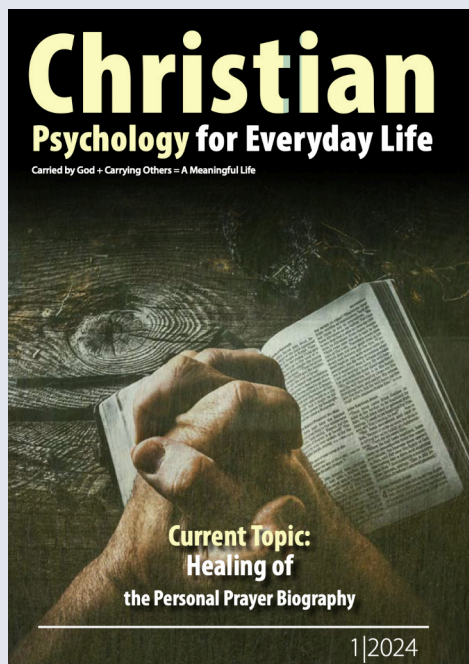
All counseling relationships must come to a healthy termination. Part of closure may include a review of all that has transpired. We see once again the example of Nehemiah. In Nehemiah 9, we see Nehemiah spent time reminiscing and reviewing with the people. In the counseling relationship, it can be therapeutic in itself to see just how far the client has come. Counselors may say like Nehemiah, “...this work had been done with the help of our Lord” (Nehemiah 6: 16b). It can also be a time to assess the needs for continued growth. Ending the counseling relationship is only the beginning of a lifetime of growth and maintenance. May each life God sends your way come away with healing, restoration, fortified walls and display His workmanship and shalom for His glory.



New: The free eMagazin Christian Psychology For Everyday Life

Christian Psychology not only contains insights for psychologists, therapists or counselors, but also a treasure for everyone who cares about following Jesus.

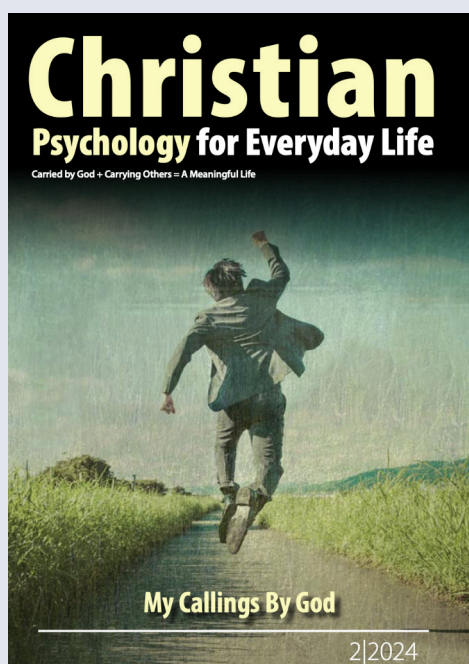
I as the editor welcome you to the editions of the free eMagazin Christian Psychology for Everyday Life, starting now in Summer 2024. I have been publishing the German-language www.gehaltvoll-magazin.de since 2016. I will now work on various topics to transform them for our English editions and supplement with some new contributions.



The topic of the first number, "**Healing of The Personal Prayer Biography**", began for me with an impression during prayer: "If you knew what prayer can achieve, then you would only pray!"

What did this thought make you feel?

We all need a healing of our prayer biography, of our previous experiences with praying.



The title of number 2 is "**My Callings By God**".

"I rejoice at what God can do with a life if we open doors for his working, at the impact he makes on this world through us. Calling – hearing this word brings many thoughts to mind: meaning, election, God's will, success, bearing fruit, blessing, God's working,..."

Here you can read or download the pdfs: <https://www.werner-may.de/CP-for-Everyday-Life>

About Theory and Practice



Miguel Ángel Alcarria
(Mexico/Spain)

Miguel has a degree in Psychology and a degree in Theology. He chairs the Association of Christian Psychologists, which has a presence in more than 20 countries throughout Latin America, together with his wife he pastors a church in Mexico City and is a regular collaborator in César Vidal's Show called La Voz with his own section, La Picoteca.

Miguel Ángel Alcarria es Licenciado en Psicología y Graduado en Teología. Preside la Asociación de Psicólogos Cristianos, que tiene presencia en más de 20 países en toda hispanoamérica, junto a su esposa pastorea una iglesia en Ciudad de México y es colaborador habitual en la sección la Psicoteca del programa La Voz con César Vidal.

Former contributions in our eJournal you can see her:

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/20/#p=7>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/#p=56>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/13/#p=90>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/12/#p=104>

The Transformative Role of the Holy Spirit in Therapeutic Healing of the Believing Patient: An Integration of Psychological and Spiritual Dimensions

According to Delaney et al. (2007), only 66% of psychologists believe in God in any form, compared to 95% of the general population. This statistically significant fact that includes Christianity as a majority faith could suggest that there is a perception of incompatibility, by many psychologists, between the development of a scientific mindset and the acceptance of spiritual or religious beliefs.

Recognizing this statistical reality, the APA Code of Ethics (2017, Principle E) states that religion must be respected by mental health professionals as part of social diversity; However, it is difficult to respect and preserve what is not understood or is actively rejected in some cases.

El papel transformador del Espíritu Santo en la curación terapéutica del paciente creyente: una integración de las dimensiones psicológica y espiritual

Según Delaney et al. (2007), sólo el 66% de los psicólogos cree en Dios en alguna de sus formas, frente al 95% de la población general. Este dato significativo en términos estadísticos que incluye el cristianismo como fe mayoritaria podría sugerir que existe una percepción de incompatibilidad, por parte de muchos psicólogos, entre el desarrollo de una mentalidad científica y la aceptación de creencias espirituales o religiosas.

Reconociendo esta realidad estadística, el código ético de la APA (2017, Principio E) establece que la religión debe ser respetada por los profesionales de la salud mental como parte de la diversidad social; no obstante, es difícil

In this sense, it is necessary for professional associations of psychology to promote their training in this matter in order to understand and address the religious and spiritual fact. However, only 13% of APA-accredited psychological training programs include some formal content on religion or spirituality (Brawer et al., 2002).

The curative impact of faith: A current debate

Different research, such as the meta-analysis by Captari et al. (2018), have consistently demonstrated that integrating clients' religious-spiritual beliefs in psychotherapy is associated with a significant improvement in psychological and spiritual functioning compared to psychotherapy that excludes faith beliefs. In fact, most patients are willing to integrate their faith into the treatment and take advantage of its benefits (Oxhandler et al., 2021).

However, this is a controversial fact for those clinical psychologists who believe that psychology can only be scientific if it leaves the spiritual reality of their clients outside of their practices; denying an important part of the identity of many of their patients, which makes sense of their lives and sets up their belief and behavior system.

Since the times of William Osler (1910), science has been clear in pointing out that faith can have a curative impact through the cognitive-emotional components associated with the faith experience that facilitate introspection, emotional regulation, sense of purpose, and resilience. This influence is seen beyond the miraculous facts or supernatural phenomena that have been documented by countless believers throughout history.

Thus, understanding the patient and integrating their faith into psychotherapy can offer unique benefits to their well-being, supported by empirical evidence. This is a significant challenge for psychology that needs to evolve into more integrative approaches in order to address patient needs in both specific and global ways.

Integrate faith into the therapeutic process

Scientific psychology continues to ask what are the underlying cognitive-emotional and behavi-

respetar y preservar aquello que no se comprende o que se rechaza activamente en algunos casos.

En este sentido, es menester de las asociaciones profesionales de la psicología promover su capacitación en esta materia con el propósito de comprender y abordar el hecho religioso y espiritual. Sin embargo, sólo el 13% de los programas de formación psicológica acreditados por la APA incluyen algún contenido formal sobre religión o espiritualidad (Brawer et al., 2002).

El impacto curativo de la fe, un debate vigente

Diferentes investigaciones, tales como el meta-análisis de Captari et al. (2018), han demostrado de manera consistente que integrar las creencias religioso-espirituales de los clientes en la psicoterapia se asocia a una mejora significativa en el funcionamiento psicológico y espiritual en comparación con la psicoterapia que excluye las creencias de fe. De hecho, la mayoría de los pacientes están dispuestos a integrar su fe en el tratamiento y aprovecharse de sus beneficios (Oxhandler et al., 2021).

Sin embargo, este es un hecho controvertido para aquellos psicólogos clínicos que consideran que la psicología sólo puede ser científica si deja al margen de sus prácticas la realidad espiritual de sus clientes; negando así una parte importante de la identidad de muchos de sus pacientes, la cual proporciona sentido a sus vidas y configura su sistema de creencias y comportamiento.

Desde los tiempos de William Osler (1910), la ciencia es clara al señalar que la fe puede tener un impacto curativo por medio de los componentes cognitivo-emocionales asociados a la experiencia de fe que facilitan la introspección, la regulación emocional, el sentido de propósito y la resiliencia. Esta influencia se observa más allá de los hechos milagrosos o de los fenómenos sobrenaturales que han sido documentados por innumerables creyentes a lo largo de la historia.

De este modo, comprender al paciente e integrar su fe en la psicoterapia puede ofrecer beneficios únicos para su bienestar, respaldados por la evidencia empírica. Esto constituye un



Look upon Zion... Your Eyes will see Jerusalem... Is 33:20

oral causes and mechanisms of these positive effects of faith that improve mental health, which would explain why faith does not act in the same way in all self-perceived people as believers but only in those who hold an intrinsic, mature, deep and authentic faith.

With respect to Christian faith, some of these mechanisms included in the scientific literature are: (1) the acquisition of healthy behaviors promoted by the Christian faith, (2) building relationships around a common faith that act as a social support network, (3) encouraging practices such as sentence that promote emotional regulation and have positive physical repercussions, (4) the promotion of hope as an immunostimulation and emotional regulation factor that cushions the harmful effects of stress and emotional suffering by generating a positive expectation about the future and allowing us to gather the necessary elements to face life's challenges and (5) the establishment of the figure of the Holy Spirit as a means of connection with the divine and as a facilitator of empowerment and transformation.

The role of the Holy Spirit in the therapeutic process of Christian patients represents a bridge between psychology and faith that can be understood from the perspective of Bowlby's attachment theory. The Bible shows the Holy Spirit as that figure that gives believers the guidance, empowerment, wisdom, and consolation necessary to navigate the complexities of human life. The Holy Spirit figure acts as a source of safe attachment, an unwavering support base from which the patient can extract the emotional resources necessary for the therapeutic process provided there is an approach that integrates the religious-spiritual factor into the therapeutic framework.

In this way, in the therapeutic context, the figure of the Holy Spirit becomes an essential resource for those who face personal challenges or situations of emotional distress from a Christian worldview; thus generating a triadic framework in the therapeutic process carried out with Christian patients and made up of the counselor, the patient and the Holy Spirit.

To achieve such integration, it is essential to connect the patient with the spiritual practices

gran reto para la psicología que necesita evolucionar hacia enfoques más integradores con la finalidad de atender las necesidades de los pacientes de una forma tanto específica como global.

Integrar la fe en el proceso terapéutico

La psicología científica sigue preguntándose cuáles son las causas y mecanismos cognitivo-emocionales y conductuales subyacentes de estos efectos positivos de la fe que mejoran la salud mental, los cuales explicarían por qué la fe no actúa de la misma forma en todas las personas autopercibidas como creyentes sino sólo en aquellas que ostentan una fe intrínseca, madura, profunda y auténtica.

Con respecto a la fe cristiana, algunos de estos mecanismos recogidos por la literatura científica son: (1) la adquisición de conductas saludables promovidas por la fe cristiana, (2) el establecimiento de relaciones en torno a una fe común que actúan como red social de apoyo, (3) el fomento de prácticas tales como la oración que favorecen la regulación emocional y tienen repercusiones positivas a nivel físico, (4) la promoción de la esperanza como factor de inmunoestimulación y de regulación emocional que amortigua los efectos nocivos del estrés y el sufrimiento emocional generando una expectativa positiva sobre el futuro y permitiendo reunir los elementos necesarios para afrontar los retos de la vida y (5) la instauración de la figura del Espíritu Santo como medio de conexión con lo divino y como facilitador de empoderamiento y transformación.

El papel del Espíritu Santo en el proceso terapéutico de los pacientes cristianos representa un puente entre la psicología y la fe que puede ser entendido desde la perspectiva de la teoría del apego de Bowlby. La Biblia muestra al Espíritu Santo como esa figura que brinda a los creyentes la guía, el empoderamiento, la sabiduría y la consolación necesarios para navegar en medio de las complejidades de la vida humana. La figura del Espíritu Santo actúa como una fuente de apego seguro, una base de apoyo inquebrantable de la que el paciente puede extraer los recursos emocionales necesarios para el proceso terapéutico siempre que se

that make sense of their spiritual life, such as prayer or meditation in the Scriptures; practices considered as a means of understanding God's will through the Holy Spirit and dealing with the vicissitudes of life. Helping the patient connect to their Christian identity through spiritual practices allows them to manage stress, accept suffering, develop a sense of purpose, transform dysfunctional thinking patterns, cope with adversity, and cultivate a positive perspective on life.

Only through this type of approach can the Christian patient experience a level of well-being that goes beyond traditional therapeutic approaches; by considering the human spiritual dimension that, in the case of Christian patients, allows the Holy Spirit to act as a psychological anchor that promotes healthy, proactive and resilient coping styles, providing essential support in its therapeutic healing process.

For this reason, both psychological training programs and clinical practice need to evolve to include a greater understanding of faith, allowing psychologists to approach their patients more globally.

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cuenta con un abordaje que integre el factor religioso-espiritual en el marco terapéutico.

De esta forma, en el contexto terapéutico, la figura del Espíritu Santo se convierte en un recurso esencial para aquellas personas que enfrentan retos personales o situaciones de angustia emocional desde una cosmovisión cristiana; generando así un marco triádico en el proceso terapéutico llevado a cabo con pacientes cristianos y conformado por el consejero, el paciente y el Espíritu Santo.

Para conseguir tal integración es primordial conectar al paciente con las prácticas espirituales que dan sentido a su vida espiritual, tales como la oración o la meditación en las Escrituras; prácticas consideradas como un medio para entender la voluntad de Dios a través del Espíritu Santo y afrontar las vicisitudes de la vida. Ayudar al paciente a conectar con su identidad cristiana por medio de las prácticas espirituales le permite controlar el estrés, aceptar el sufrimiento, desarrollar un sentido de propósito, transformar los patrones de pensamiento disfuncionales, afrontar la adversidad y cultivar una perspectiva positiva de la vida.

Sólo a través de este tipo de abordaje, el paciente cristiano puede experimentar un nivel de bienestar que va más allá de los enfoques terapéuticos tradicionales; al considerar la dimensión espiritual humana que, en el caso de los pacientes cristianos, permite al Espíritu Santo actuar como un ancla psicológica que promueve estilos de afrontamiento saludables, proactivos y resilientes, proporcionando un apoyo esencial en su proceso de curación terapéutica.

Por esta razón, es necesario que tanto los programas de formación psicológica como la práctica clínica evolucionen para incluir una mayor comprensión de la fe, permitiendo a los psicólogos abordar a sus pacientes de una forma más global.



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Comment to

„The Transformative Role of the Holy Spirit in Therapeutic Healing for the Believing Patient: An Integration of Psychological and Spiritual Dimension”

In his article, Miguel Ángel Alcarria describes the importance of a healthy spirituality for mental health and stability and argues that the inclusion of faith in therapeutic processes should be understood as a competence that prospective psychologists and therapists should learn more systematically in their training programmes. I share his opinion and think that the topic is now also being appreciated in well-founded training programmes. It is possible to create space in therapeutic work to reflect on one's own relationship with God and to experience the resources of one's own faith as an anchor in acute life crises. Miguel Ángel Alcarria also describes how the healing resources of faith are not effective for all people who describe themselves as believers, 'but only for those who have an intrinsic, mature, deep and authentic faith'.

In my experience, incorporating faith into therapy can help people to build or rediscover such a health-promoting faith in their lives. In doing so, I assume that faith itself is always a gift from God to us. We cannot create it, not even as therapists - we can only find it in our clients as it is right now.

Christian therapy approaches can, however, make a significant contribution to focussing on the existing faith, taking it seriously and allowing it to become more mature and reflective. They can create space for something to happen on the relationship level between God and the client in that the therapist addresses this relationship level and encourages honest, fear-free communication with God. The expectations of the Christian therapist play an important role here: where he himself believes that God can reveal himself and have a healing effect, he creates space for God and directs the client's gaze towards God. This also has the effect that the sole fixation on one's own strengths or the fixation on the therapist and his abilities diminishes. Expectations of healing and a solution can be shifted in a healing way so that people can emerge from excessive demands and God can come into play.

People are at different points in their spiritual growth processes. Therapists should be sensitive to this and refrain from correcting the client in their understanding of God and their practice of faith. The therapeutic dialogue is not the primary place where people are taught their

faith. In my opinion, this is the task of the church and should not be taken away from it. Similarly, the therapist should refrain from performing certain priestly acts. This could lead to role confusion and cause a conflict of conscience, especially for Catholic clients. Such activities can be experienced as very powerful by clients who may already have a tendency to become very attached to the therapist. The therapist may then be attributed with healing powers or supernatural abilities that promote a relationship of dependence. This could also be one of the points that specialists have in mind when they speak out against ideologically orientated (Christian) psychotherapy.

It is therefore important for us, as representatives of Christian psychology and therapy, to emphasise that Christian psychotherapy can indeed be professionally measured against other forms of therapy, at the same time taking into account the principles of psychotherapeutic action.

In Christian psychotherapy, the therapist understands the client's faith as a resource and can specifically address and encourage it. He can accept questions and doubts and does not have to make himself God's advocate. They can refrain from imposing their own understanding of faith on the client and recognise transfers

and projections that burden and alienate the image of God. He is able to look at and reflect on this image of God together with the person seeking counselling and also to sense and accept complaints and bitterness towards God.

In Christian-orientated therapy, people can evaluate their life experiences, crises and ruptures against the background of faith and perhaps reclassify them. This promotes a meaningful view of one's own life, which can make a decisive contribution to improving life satisfaction.

The therapist is aware that even his own faith is only a piecemeal realisation that continues to develop and also grows in fellowship with other Christians. He reaches out for an inner attitude of neither saving nor judging and of allowing faith, hope and love to be strengthened by God again and again in order to bring them into the process with the client as effective factors.

I would like to thank Miguel Ángel Alcarria for his article, which encourages us to continue developing Christian therapy methods in order to support people holistically in their processes and incorporate their faith. A healthy faith promotes and enables maturation and growth and can be part of a holistic psychotherapeutic process.





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How the Holy Spirit orchestrates spiritual formation - Insights from Theology and findings from Positive Psychology

1. The renewed person in the focus of theology and psychology

The spiritual growth of Christians is one of the central theological topics in the two-thousand-year history of Christianity. The following questions have played a central role both in theological debates and in the personal everyday practice of following Christ:

How can the spiritual growth of Christians be encouraged and what makes it more difficult? How can the character traits of Jesus take shape in his followers? How do beginners in the faith become mature Christians in the sense of the objective of Ephesians 4:13? In this verse, the apostle Paul encourages young Christians to continue to grow spiritually after the initial stage of a personal new birth or rebirth in order to become more like Jesus Christ, regardless of how quickly their life with God develops. He sets as his goal the perfected human being and the full measure of the fullness of Christ. Accordingly, the spiritual shaping of

Wie der Heilige Geist geistliches Wachstum orchestriert – Einsichten der Theologie und Befunde der Positiven Psychologie

1. Der erneuerte Mensch im Fokus von Theologie und Psychologie

Das geistliche Wachstum von Christinnen und Christen gehört zu den zentralen theologischen Themen der zweitausendjährigen Christentumsgeschichte. Sowohl in den theologischen Debatten als auch in der persönlichen alltäglichen Lebenspraxis der Christusbefolger haben dabei die folgenden Fragen eine zentrale Rolle gespielt:

Wie kann das geistliche Wachstum von Christen gefördert werden und was erschwert es? Wie können die Charakterzüge Jesus in seinen Nachfolgern Gestalt gewinnen? Wie werden Glaubensanfänger zu mündigen reifen Christen im Sinne der Zielsetzung von Epheser 4, 13? Der Apostel Paulus ermutigt in diesem Vers die jungen Christen, nach dem Anfangsstadium einer persönlichen Neugeburt oder Wiedergeburt geistlich weiter zu wachsen, um Jesus Christus ähnlicher zu werden, unabhängig davon wie schnell sich das Leben mit Gott ent-

character remains a lifelong transformation program for Christians in all phases of growth.

Many ideas on the shaping of human character have their origins in the moral traditions of Greek philosophy. Arthur (2023), for example, traces historical lines of influence from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas. In the Orthodox and Ancient Near Eastern churches, this process is evidenced by the concepts of theosis and deification (see Gawrilyuk, Hofer, & Levering, 2024). In recent Western theology, this growth process is described as the path to a holy life or, in short, sanctification. In the multi-denominational sanctification movement of the 19th century, the gift of a person's rebirth was understood as the first work of grace and the complete cleansing of sins as the second work of grace. This second stage was only achieved if a person lived in complete devotion to God. Despite the seriousness of a life focused on holiness, there are two dangers associated with this view: It can lead to an obsessive Christian perfectionism or it can promote a discriminatory division of Christians into different categories (see Naselli, 2010).

Despite different theological backgrounds, however, many Catholic, Lutheran, Evangelical and Pentecostal theologians agree that Jesus overcame the separation between people and God through his redemptive death, that people are called upon by the Bible to lead a holy life after turning to God, and that sanctification only reaches its culmination point after the world has been saved. Everyone also agrees that the Bible promises success on this path of change because the Holy Spirit, as the initiator and giver of power, takes over the direction in the lives of Christians. Exactly how divine sovereignty and human responsibility interact in this process will remain a mystery (see Gundry, 1996 and Launonen, 2023). Nevertheless, the spiritual renewal movements in many Christian churches have repeatedly attempted to accompany the spiritual growth process of sanctification through spiritual exercises in everyday life.

In my personal life journey as a Christian, the topic of spiritual growth kept coming into my

wickelt. Er setzt als Zielvorgabe den vollendeten Menschen und das volle Maß der Fülle Christi. Demnach bleibt die geistliche Formung des Charakters für Christen in allen Wachstumsphasen ein lebenslanges Transformationsprogramm.

Viele Ideen zur Formung des menschlichen Charakters haben ihren Ursprung in den Moral-Traditionen der griechischen Philosophie. Arthur (2023) weist zum Beispiel historische Einflusslinien von Aristoteles auf Thomas von Aquin nach. In den orthodoxen und altorientalischen Kirchen wird dieser Prozess mit den Konzepten der Theosis und der Deifikation (Vergöttlichung) belegt (siehe Gawrilyuk, Hofer, & Levering, 2024). In der neueren westlichen Theologie wird dieser Wachstumsprozess als Weg zu einem heiligen Leben beschrieben oder kurz gesagt als Heiligung. In der multi-denominationalen Heiligungsbewegung des 19. Jahrhunderts wurde das Geschenk der Wiedergeburt eines Menschen als erster Segen (first work of grace) und die vollständige Reinigung von Sünden als zweiter Segen (second work of grace) verstanden. Diese zweite Stufe werde nur erreicht, wenn ein Mensch in völliger Hingabe an Gott lebe. Trotz der Ernsthaftigkeit eines auf Heiligkeit ausgerichteten Lebens sind mit dieser Sichtweise zwei Gefahren verbunden: Sie kann zu einem zwanghaften christlichen Perfektionismus führen oder sie kann eine diskriminierende Aufteilung von Christen in verschiedene Kategorien fördern (siehe Naselli, 2010).

Trotz unterschiedlicher theologischer Hintergründe sind sich aber viele katholische, lutherische, evangelikale und pentekostale Theologen darin einig, dass Jesus durch seinen Erlösungstod die Trennung zwischen den Menschen und Gott überwunden hat, dass Menschen nach ihrer Hinwendung zu Gott durch die Bibel aufgefordert werden, ein heiliges Leben zu führen und dass die Heiligung ihren Kulminationspunkt erst nach der Wiederkunft Jesu erreicht. Alle stimmen auch darin überein, dass die Bibel Erfolg auf diesem Veränderungsweg verspricht, weil der Heilige Geist als Initiator und Kraftspender die Regie im Leben der Christen über-

focus - in my personal Bible reading, as a leader of a small group in a German evangelical free church, as a church planter in the suburbs of a major German city, in coaching and counseling other people, and finally in planning my book on Christian art of living. This is how I came into contact with books by English-speaking authors such as Dallas Willard, Richard Foster and John Ortberg, which were also translated into German after the turn of the millennium. In addition to familiar concepts such as spiritual "growth", "discipleship" and "discipleship", they also brought "spiritual formation" into play. Translations into German such as "spirituelle Bildung" or "geistliche Formung" sound a bit bumpy to me and have not yet finally established themselves. They do not adequately capture the entire process of change in the lives of Christians. Nevertheless, I have adopted the term "spiritual formation", which is also used in the German translation of Comer's influential book (2024). After all, it also covers the aspects of guidance from spiritual advisors, counselors, coaches and therapists. However, I have left the term "geistliches Wachstum" in the title of my article. In German-speaking countries, there are now many independent guides to spiritual growth, such as Schmidt (2021). They were mainly inspired by English-speaking authors who have brought forgotten spiritual exercises from the old Christian tradition back into consciousness.

Before we look at the biblical images of spiritual growth, I would like to make an important distinction. To characterize the different pace of growth, a breakthrough spirituality is often distinguished from a process spirituality. In breakthrough spirituality, an encounter with God focuses on a specific point in time, a prayer of surrender at a conversion, a blessing, a confession, a vow or an emotional spiritual peak experience. These life-changing experiences can often be precisely dated. In process spirituality, there can also be occasional peak experiences. However, people here primarily experience constant, patient growth in following Jesus as a lifelong process. Both types of spirituality with their different rates of development are justified if we measure them against the biblical teachings on spiritual growth.

nimmt. Wie genau dabei göttliche Souveränität und menschliche Verantwortung zusammenwirken, wird ein Geheimnis bleiben (siehe Gundry, 1996 und Launonen, 2023). Trotzdem haben die geistlichen Erneuerungsbewegungen in vielen christlichen Kirchen immer wieder versucht, den geistlichen Wachstumsprozess der Heiligung durch geistliche Übungen im Alltag zu begleiten.

Auf meiner persönlichen Lebensreise als Christ geriet das Thema des geistlichen Wachstums immer wieder in meinen Aufmerksamkeitsfokus - bei meiner persönlichen Bibellese, als Leiter einer Kleingruppe einer deutschen evangelischen Freikirche, als Gemeindegründer im Vorort einer deutschen Großstadt, im Coaching und der Beratung anderer Menschen und schließlich auch bei der Planung meines Buchs über Christliche Lebenskunst. So kam ich in Berührung mit den Büchern englischsprachiger Autoren wie Dallas Willard, Richard Foster und John Ortberg, die nach der Jahrtausendwende auch ins Deutsche übersetzt wurden. Sie brachten zusätzlich zu vertrauten Konzepten wie geistliches „Wachstum“, „Nachfolge“ und „Jüngerschaft“ auch „spiritual formation“ ins Spiel. Übersetzungen ins Deutsche, wie „spirituelle Bildung“ oder „geistliche Formung“ klingen für mich etwas holprig und haben sich noch nicht endgültig etabliert. Sie erfassen nur unzureichend den gesamten Veränderungsprozess im Leben von Christen. Trotzdem habe ich den Begriff „geistliche Formung“ übernommen, der auch in der deutschen Übersetzung des einflussreichen Buchs von Comer (2024) verwendet wird. Er bildet immerhin auch die Aspekte der Anleitung durch geistliche Begleiter, Berater, Coaches und Therapeuten ab. Im Titel meines Artikels habe ich es allerdings bei dem Begriff „geistliches Wachstum“ belassen. Im deutschsprachigen Raum gibt es inzwischen viele eigenständige Anleitungen zum geistlichen Wachstum wie zum Beispiel Schmidt (2021). Sie wurden vor allem durch englischsprachige Autoren inspiriert, die vergessene geistliche Übungen aus alten christlichen Traditionen neu ins Bewusstsein gehoben haben.

2. Biblical images for spiritual growth: transformation and sanctification

In his letters, the apostle Paul uses the term transformation (metamorphó) to describe the process of spiritual growth.

Romans 12, 2 Let God ... transform (metamorphó) you so that your whole mind may be renewed.

Romans 8, 29 He has also destined them all to become like his Son. They are all to be conformed (sym-morphó) to his image.

Galatians 4, 19 My children, I am once again suffering birth pangs for you until Christ has taken shape (morphó) in your midst.

The Swedish theologian and author Anders-Petter Sjödin illustrates this transformation (metamorphosis) with an analogy from biology, the four-stage life cycle of a butterfly. The inconspicuous egg develops into a larva, then a chrysalis, from which the wonderful butterfly finally emerges. According to Sjödin, none of these stages can be ignored by force. All stages of development have their justification. But what factors are necessary for this gradual transformation? It is the light of the sun, it is the struggle to shed the shell and it is the practice of flying. In analogy to the metamorphosis of the butterfly, according to Sjödin, three components of the transformation process can also be recognized in the lives of Christians: The Holy Spirit as life-giving energy, a courageous battle mentality to overcome crises and conflicts, and finally spiritual exercises that Christians use to train discipleship (Sjödin, 2012, pages 15-16).

The biblical authors use other very vivid images, analogies and metaphors to explain to readers the processes of change in spiritual growth. I briefly outline some of them in the following section:

- Organic growth on the vine: we remain as branches on the vine of Jesus and are nourished by him (John 15:1-8 Colossians 1:7)
- The natural stages of a person's development from child to mature adult (Ephesians 4:14)

Bevor wir uns mit den biblischen Bildern für geistliches Wachstum befassen, möchte ich eine wichtige Unterscheidung voranstellen. Um das unterschiedliche Tempo des Wachstums zu kennzeichnen, wird oft eine Durchbruchspiritualität von einer Prozess-Spiritualität unterschieden. Bei der Durchbruchspiritualität konzentriert sich eine Gottesbegegnung auf einen bestimmten Zeitpunkt, ein Übergabegebet bei einer Bekehrung, eine Segnung, ein Beichtgespräch, ein Gelübde oder ein emotionales geistliches Gipfelerlebnis. Oft lassen sich diese lebenswendenden Erfahrungen genau datieren. In der Prozess-Spiritualität kann es auch gelegentliche Gipfelerfahrungen geben. Menschen erleben hier aber primär ein stetiges geduldiges Wachsen in der Nachfolge Jesu als lebenslangen Prozess. Beide Typen von Spiritualität mit ihren unterschiedlichen Entwicklungstempi haben ihre Berechtigung, wenn wir sie an den biblischen Lehren über geistliches Wachstum messen.

2. Biblische Bilder für geistliches Wachstum: Transformation und Heiligung

Der Apostel Paulus verwendet in seinen Briefen für den geistlichen Wachstumsprozess den Begriff der Transformation (Metamorphó).

Römer 12, 2 Lasst euch ... von Gott verwandeln (metamorphó), damit euer ganzes Denken erneuert wird.

Römer 8, 29 Sie alle hat er auch dazu bestimmt, seinem Sohn gleich zu werden. Nach dessen Bild sollen sie alle gestaltet (sym-morphó) werden.

Galater 4, 19 Meine Kinder, ich leide noch einmal Geburtswehen um euch, bis Christus in eurer Mitte Gestalt (morphó) angenommen hat.

Der schwedische Theologe und Autor Anders-Petter Sjödin illustriert diese Transformation (Metamorphose) durch eine Analogie aus der Biologie, dem vierstufigen Lebenszyklus eines Schmetterlings. Aus dem unscheinbaren Ei entwickelt sich eine Larve, dann eine Puppe, der schließlich der wunderbare Schmetterling entfliegt. Nach Sjödin kann keine dieser Phasen mit Gewalt übergangen werden. Alle Entwick-

- The image of spiritual training that we complete alone or in a team (1 Corinthians 9: 24-25; Hebrews 12: 14)
- The image of carrying the cross (cruciformity): According to Gorman (2021), the perfection of transformation in Christ can be even more appropriately described by cruciformity than by imitation (see also Chandler, 2016, Introduction).
- The image of the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). How to care for our physical body as God's holy dwelling place (embodiment: fasting, exercise, sleep and stress reduction (after Chandler, 2016, chapter 11).
- The image of the new heart and the new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26)

3. Components of spiritual growth

Spiritual growth and spiritual formation have different components that interact with each other and are often difficult to separate. Diane Chandler therefore compares them to the facets of a cut diamond. No single facet reflects the beauty of the piece of jewelry. Accordingly, the different character traits of a Christian also reflect the light and life of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. She describes the interaction of Father, Son and Spirit vividly: "Christian formation is best described as an interactive process by which God the Father conforms believers into the image of Jesus through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit by overseeing the development of the whole person in various life dimensions for the sake of others. God the Father oversees the process. As Redeemer, Jesus the Son provides the impetus and model as the perfect image of God into which followers are to be conformed. The Holy Spirit provides the divine love and power that causes the process to take place and advance" (Chandler, 2016, Introduction).

In addition to this Trinitarian perspective, I propose to divide spiritual growth into six different aspects or components:

lungsstufen haben ihre Berechtigung. Welche Faktoren sind aber für diese schrittweise Umgestaltung notwendig? Es ist das Licht der Sonne, es ist der Kampf, um die Hülle abzustreifen und es ist die Übung des Fliegens. In Analogie zur Metamorphose des Schmetterlings sind nun nach Sjödin auch im Leben von Christen drei Komponenten des Verwandlungsprozesses zu erkennen: Der Heilige Geist als lebensspendende Energie, eine mutige Kampfmentalität, um Krisen und Konflikte zu überwinden und schließlich geistlichen Übungen, mit denen Christen Nachfolge und Jüngerschaft trainieren (Sjödin, 2012, Seiten 15-16).

Die biblischen Autoren verwenden weitere sehr anschauliche Bilder, Analogien und Metaphern, um den Lesern die Veränderungsprozesse im geistlichen Wachstum zu erklären. Ich skizziere einige von ihnen kurz in dem folgenden Abschnitt:

- Das organische Wachstum am Weinstock: Wir bleiben als Reben am Weinstock Jesus und werden durch ihn versorgt (Johannes 15, 1-8 Kolosser 1, 7).
- Die natürlichen Entwicklungsstufen eines Menschen vom Kind- bis zum reifen mündigen Erwachsenen (Epheser 4, 14).
- Das Bild des geistlichen Trainings, das wir allein oder in einer Mannschaft absolvieren (1. Korinther 9, 24-25; Hebräer 12, 14).
- Das Bild des Kreuztragens (Cruciformity): Nach Gorman (2021) lässt sich die Perfektionierung der Umgestaltung in Christus noch angemessener mit Kruziformität beschreiben als mit Nachahmung (siehe auch Chandler, 2016, Introduction).
- Das Bild des Körpers als eines Tempels des Heiligen Geistes (1. Korinther 6, 19-20). Wie pflegen wir unseren physischen Körper als heiligen Wohnort Gottes (Embodiment: Ernährung, Bewegung, Schlaf und Stressreduktion (nach Chandler, 2016, Kapitel 11).
- Das Bild des neuen Herzens und des neuen Geistes (Hesekiel 36, 26).

- (1) The goal of spiritual growth is Christ-likeness (imago dei).
- (2) The initiator and energizer of spiritual growth is primarily the Holy Spirit.
- (3) The companions of spiritual growth are friends, pastors, counselors, coaches and therapists.
- (4) The training disciplines of spiritual growth are spiritual exercises for character change
- (5) The training fields of spiritual growth are the family, the church and society.
- (6) The result of spiritual growth is the fruit of the Spirit.

Of the six components, in the following chapter 3 I will only go into more detail on the leading role of the Holy Spirit (component 2) and the human contribution of spiritual exercises to character change (component 4). In doing so, I assume that the goals, initiator, promoter and facilitator, training disciplines, training fields and results of spiritual growth can be separated under an analytical view, but are in reality inseparably interwoven under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Before we look at the central role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual growth in chapter 4, however, it is first necessary to keep the goal in mind.

What would the process of spiritual change in the lives of Christians be without a clear goal? Fortunately, Christian denominations and denominations agree that Christlikeness is the goal, even if they differ significantly in the methods and components of this process of change. Imago Dei - the likeness of God distinguishes human beings from all other creatures. There is clear evidence of this in the Old Testament, for example in the Hebrew Bible in Genesis and in the Psalms. They point to the original creation intentions of God, who desired a counterpart in his image:

God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him. He created them male and female (Genesis 1:27).

On the day God created man, he made him like God (Genesis 5:1)

3. Komponenten des geistlichen Wachstums

Geistliches Wachstum und geistliche Formung haben unterschiedliche Komponenten, die miteinander interagieren und oft nur schwer voneinander zu trennen sind. Diane Chandler vergleicht sie daher mit den Facetten eines geschliffenen Diamanten. Keine einzelne Facette gibt die Schönheit des Schmuckstücks wieder. Entsprechend reflektieren auch die unterschiedlichen Charaktereigenschaften eines Christen das Licht und das Leben Jesu Christi durch die Kraft des Heiligen Geistes. Das Zusammenwirken von Vater, Sohn und Geist beschreibt sie anschaulich: „Christian formation is best described as an interactive process by which God the Father conforms believers into the image of Jesus through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit by overseeing the development of the whole person in various life dimensions for the sake of others. God the Father oversees the process. As Redeemer, Jesus the Son provides the impetus and model as the perfect image of God into which followers are to be conformed. The Holy Spirit provides the divine love and power that causes the process to take place and advance.” (Chandler, 2016, Introduction)

Ich schlage vor, ergänzend zu dieser trinitarischen Perspektive geistliches Wachstum in sechs unterschiedliche Aspekte oder Komponenten zu gliedern:

- (1) Das Ziel des geistlichen Wachstums ist die Christus-Ähnlichkeit (Imago dei).
- (2) Der Initiator und Energetisierer des geistlichen Wachstums ist primär der Heilige Geist.
- (3) Die Begleiter des geistlichen Wachstums sind Freunde, geistliche Leiter, Seelsorger, Berater, Coaches und Therapeuten.
- (4) Die Trainingsdisziplinen des geistlichen Wachstums sind geistliche Übungen zur Charakterveränderung
- (5) Die Trainingsfelder des geistlichen Wachstums liegen in der Familie, der Gemeinde und der Gesellschaft.
- (6) Das Ergebnis des geistlichen Wachstums ist die Frucht des Geistes.

In the New Testament, we also find statements about Christ as the image of God and the first-born before all creation, for example in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15, as well as statements about the Christlikeness of people, for example in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Colossians 3:10. Paul compares the formation of young Christians to the labor pains of a pregnant woman at birth, which are only completed “when Christ takes shape in you” (Galatians 4:19).

In the New Testament, too, we find statements about Christ as the image of God and the first-born before all creation, such as in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15, as well as statements about the Christlikeness of people, such as in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Colossians 3:10. Paul compares the formation of young Christians to the labor pains of a pregnant woman at birth, which are only completed when Christ takes shape in you (Galatians 4:19).

Two concepts already mentioned in the introduction attempt to bundle the many statements in the Bible about this process into the concepts of theosis and deification. The editors of the renowned Oxford Handbook of Deification define it as follows: “Deification is a process and goal by which the human being or church or in some way the whole creation comes to participate in God, Christ, divine life, divine attributes, divine energies, or divine glory by growing into the likeness of God, while remaining a creature ontologically distinct from the Creator. This process is often described as divine adoption, regeneration, glorification, sanctification, and union with God. Human deification is made possible by the incarnation of the divine Logos in Jesus Christ and is sustained by the Holy Spirit through the sacramental life of the church, prayer, ascetical discipline, and growth in virtue (Gawrilyuk, Hofer, & Levering, 2024, p. 5).

Marc Cortez tries to uncover the mysterious idea of God-likeness and Jesus-likeness as the goal of the Christian life. In his opinion, this process should go beyond the imitation or emulation of Jesus and include all cognitive, emotional and volitional capacities. However, the process

Von den sechs Komponenten werde ich in dem folgenden Kapitel 3 vertiefend nur auf die federführende Rolle des Heiligen Geistes (Komponente 2) und den menschlichen Beitrag der geistlichen Übungen zur Charakterveränderung (Komponente 4) vertiefend eingehen. Ich gehe dabei davon aus, dass Ziele, Initiator, Förderer und Begleiter, Trainingsdisziplinen, Trainingsfelder und Ergebnisse des geistlichen Wachstums zwar unter einem analytischen Blick getrennt werden können, aber in Wirklichkeit unter der Regie des Heiligen Geistes untrennbar verwoben sind. Bevor wir uns in Kapitel 4 mit der zentralen Rolle des Heiligen Geistes im geistlichen Wachstum befassen, ist es aber zuerst notwendig, das Ziel im Blick zu behalten.

Was wäre der geistliche Veränderungsprozess im Leben von Christen ohne ein klares Ziel? Glücklicherweise sind sich christliche Konfessionen und Denominationen darin einig, dass die die Christusähnlichkeit das Ziel ist, wenn sie sich auch deutlich bei den Methoden und Komponenten dieses Veränderungsprozesses unterscheiden. Imago Dei – die Gottes-ebenbildlichkeit unterscheidet den Menschen von allen anderen Geschöpfen. Hierfür gibt es eine Reihe eindeutiger Belegstellen im Alten Testament, zum Beispiel in der hebräischen Bibel in Genesis und in den Psalmen. Sie weisen auf die ursprünglichen Schöpfungsabsichten Gottes hin, der sich ein Gegenüber nach seinem Bilde wünschte:

Gott erschuf den Menschen als sein Bild, als Bild Gottes erschuf er ihn. Männlich und weiblich erschuf er sie (Genesis 1, 27).
Am Tag, da Gott den Menschen erschuf, machte er ihn Gott ähnlich (Genesis 5, 1)

Auch im Neuen Testament finden wir sowohl Aussagen über Christus als Ebenbild Gottes und den Erstgeborenen vor aller Schöpfung wie zum Beispiel in 2. Korinther 4,4 und Kolosser 1, 15 als auch Aussagen über die Christusähnlichkeit von Menschen wie zum Beispiel in 2. Korinther 3, 18 und Kolosser 3, 10. Paulus vergleicht die Formung junger Christen mit den Wehen einer Schwangeren bei der Geburt, die erst abgeschlossen sind, „wenn Christus in euch Gestalt gewinnt“ (Galater 4, 19).



is not tied to the intelligence or reflective capacity of gifted people. People with mental limitations and disabilities can also experience it (Cortez, 2019, 2)⁴. The Holy Spirit as initiator and promoter of spiritual growth

4.1 The divine contribution: The Holy Spirit changes our character

In theology, both the doctrine of the Trinity and biblical anthropology emphasize the central role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual growth and character transformation of people. What happens when lost, fallen people respond to God's grace and gradually become more like Christ? What role does the Holy Spirit play as the Lord of this spiritual growth process? In this article, I follow the editors of an anthology on the art and science of spiritual formation in Hiestad & Wilson (2019, page 2): "Ultimately, formation into Christlikeness is not the result of human effort or self-will. Nor is it simply the by-product of more prayer, more therapy, more bible study, more positive psychology, more of anything! Instead, it is a new creational reality brought about by the Sovereign Spirit who is the Lord and Giver of Life. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image form one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Chapter 5 of Galatians describes the effects of the Holy Spirit on character development. They enable the change in spirit in the life of a Christian. Tomlin (2019) points out that the apostle Paul gives a list of qualities that are reminiscent of the lists of virtues in Greek philosophical literature: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and abstinence. However, one difference should be noted. Paul does not use the usual term *arete* = virtue, but the image of the fruit of the Spirit and points out that it is not about isolated virtue training, but about the holistic results of a growth process brought about by the Holy Spirit. "The image of the fruit shows that the development of these qualities takes time, just as fruit ripens gradually. These are not gifts that

Zwei schon in der Einleitung erwähnte Konzepte versuchen die vielen Aussagen der Bibel über diesen Prozess in den Konzepten der Theosis und der Deifikation zu bündeln. Die Herausgeber des renommierten Oxford Handbook of Deification definieren es folgendermaßen: "Deification is a process and goal by which the human being or church or in some way the whole creation comes to participate in God, Christ, divine life, divine attributes, divine energies, or divine glory by growing into the likeness of God, while remaining a creature ontologically distinct from the Creator. This process is often described as divine adoption, regeneration, glorification, sanctification, and union with God. Human deification is made possible by the incarnation of the divine Logos in Jesus Christ and is sustained by the Holy Spirit through the sacramental life of the church, prayer, ascetical discipline, and growth in virtue (Gawrilyuk, Hofer, & Levering, 2024, p. 5).

Marc Cortez versucht den geheimnisvollen Gedanken der Gottes- und Jesus-Ähnlichkeit als Zielpunkt des christlichen Lebens auf die Spur kommen. Nach seiner Einschätzung sollte dieser Prozess über die Imitation oder Nachahmung Jesu hinausgehen und alle kognitiven, emotionalen und volitionalen Kapazitäten einschließen. Der Prozess sei aber nicht an die Intelligenz oder Reflektionsfähigkeit von begabten Menschen gebunden. Auch Menschen mit mentalen Einschränkungen und Behinderungen könnten ihn erleben (Cortez, 2019, 2)

4. Der Heilige Geist als Initiator und Förderer des geistlichen Wachstums

4.1. Der göttliche Beitrag: Der Heilige Geist verändert unseren Charakter

In der Theologie wird sowohl in der Trinitätslehre als auch in der biblischen Anthropologie die zentrale Rolle des Heiligen Geistes im geistlichen Wachstum und der Charakterveränderung von Menschen betont. Was passiert, wenn verlorene, gefallene Menschen auf Gottes Gnade antworten und Schritt für Schritt Christus ähnlicher werden? Welche Rolle spielt der Heilige Geist als Herr dieses geistlichen

suddenly appear in a dramatic infilling with the Holy Spirit, but are the long-term results of a life in the Spirit that develop over years of practice. [...] The New Testament clearly seems to regard both - the spectacular phenomena and the silent fruit - as works of the Spirit, both of which have their justification" (Tomlin, 2019, p. 100).

Tomlin also emphasizes that a person's temperament must be distinguished from their character. Temperament comprises individual personality traits that are morally neutral. They distinguish people from other people and make up their individual characteristics, such as the contrast between introversion and extroversion. A person's character, on the other hand, can be morally evaluated. We think of pairs of opposites such as aggressiveness versus self-control or patience versus impatience.

4.2. The human contribution: spiritual exercises to change character

Humans are not creatures that are completely determined by genetics, upbringing and environment. Personality psychologists agree that beyond these factors, there are degrees of freedom for each person to live self-determined lives and to change during the later years of their lives (see Roberts & Yoon, 2023). Thus, followers of Jesus also have the opportunity to not only passively allow the Holy Spirit to work on them, but to actively and continuously give him space through spiritual exercises. However, the one must not replace the other.

How can the work of the Holy Spirit be supported by regular spiritual exercises? In the anthology by Chandler (2016), the authors show the variety of human spaces of experience in which the Holy Spirit can become effective. People who practise contemplative Bible reading and prayer have had good experiences with a regular retreat into silence. Others emphasize the emotional closeness to the heart of God the Father in prayer, try to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in listening prayer or appreciate the uplifting role of singing together in worship services.

Wachstumsprozesses? Ich folge in diesem Artikel den Herausgebern eines Sammelbandes über die Kunst und Wissenschaft der geistlichen Formung (spiritual formation) in Hiestad & Wilson (2019, Seite 2): „Ultimately, formation into Christlikeness is not the result of human effort or self-will. Nor is it simply the byproduct of more prayer, more therapy, more bible study, more positive psychology, more of anything! Instead, is it a new creational reality brought about by the Sovereign Spirit who is the Lord and Giver of Life. In the words of the Apostle Paul, “we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image form one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the spirit” (2. Korinther 3:18).

Im 5. Kapitel des Galaterbriefes werden die Wirkungen des Heiligen Geistes auf die Charakterentwicklung beschrieben. Sie ermöglichen den Wandel im Geist im Leben eines Christen. Tomlin (2019) weist darauf hin, dass der Apostel Paulus dort eine Liste von Eigenschaften aufführt, die an die Tugendlisten der griechischen philosophischen Literatur erinnern: Liebe, Freude, Friede, Langmut, Freundlichkeit, Güte, Treue, Sanftmut und Enthaltbarkeit. Auf einen Unterschied ist allerdings hinzuweisen. Paulus verwendet dabei nicht den üblichen Begriff arete = Tugend, sondern das Bild von der Frucht des Geistes und verweist darauf, dass es nicht um das isoliert Tugendtraining, sondern um die vom Heiligen Geist gewirkten ganzheitlichen Ergebnisse eines Wachstumsprozesses geht. „Das Bild von der Frucht zeigt, dass die Herausbildung dieser Eigenschaften ihre Zeit braucht, so wie auch eine Frucht allmählich reift. Es handelt sich nicht um Gaben, die in einer dramatischen Erfüllung mit dem Heiligen Geist urplötzlich da sind, sondern sie sind die langfristigen Ergebnisse eines Lebens im Geist, die in Jahren des Einübens entstehen. [...] Das Neue Testament scheint eindeutig beides – die spektakulären Phänomene und die stille Frucht – als Werke des Geistes zu betrachten, die beide ihre Berechtigung haben“ (Tomlin, 2019, Seite 100).

The celebration and celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist is a sacred place of transformation by the Holy Spirit, especially for Catholic believers, in which unity with Christ is experienced. Some authors also emphasize the effect of traumatic life events or experiences of suffering for the transformation of Christian character, which were already mentioned by psalmists and described by John of the Cross as the "dark night of the soul". Paleo-orthodox and liturgical movements try to tie in with old styles of piety from church history. Since the nineteen-seventies, the Protestant Spiritual Formation movement has also been drawing on spiritual practices that were cultivated many centuries ago in the monasteries of various religious orders. The handbook by Calhoun (2015) provides an excellent overview of the variety of these spiritual exercises.

In the evangelical churches of the USA, the Spiritual Formation movement has, since the nineteen-seventies, reopened two foundations of the Christian faith - the cultivation of a personal relationship with God and the transformation of believers into the image of Jesus Christ. Authors such as Dallas Willard and Richard Foster have drawn on classical spiritual exercises from past traditions of Christianity, such as lectio divina or the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

The theologian and psychologist Sian-Yang Tan points to various categories of spiritual exercises (disciplines) proposed by the authors mentioned. For example, Dallas Willard distinguishes disciplines of abstinence such as solitude, silence, chastity and fasting from disciplines of commitment such as Bible study, worship, service and community. Similarly, Richard Foster divides his 12 spiritual disciplines into the three groups of outward disciplines, inward disciplines and common disciplines. Perhaps even more important, however, is another reference. In addition to these disciplines known in the Christian tradition, according to Foster the so-called authentic disciplines play a decisive role in the life of Christians. They cannot be chosen. There is no control over them. They happen to us as a challenge from God. These include waiting, suffering, persecution, mercy,

Tomlin betont darüber hinaus, dass dabei das Temperament eines Menschen von seinem Charakter unterschieden werden muss. Das Temperament umfasst individuelle Persönlichkeitsmerkmale, die moralisch neutral sind. Sie unterscheiden ihn von anderen Menschen und machen seine individuelle Besonderheit aus wie zum Beispiel der Gegensatz von Introvertiertheit und Extrovertiertheit. Der Charakter eines Menschen dagegen lässt sich moralisch bewerten. Wir denken dabei an Gegensatzpaare wie Aggressivität versus Selbstbeherrschung oder Geduld versus Ungeduld.

4.2. Der menschliche Beitrag: Geistliche Übungen zur Charakterveränderung

Menschen sind keine Kreaturen, die durch Genetik, Erziehung und Umwelt vollständig determiniert sind. Persönlichkeitspsychologen sind sich einig, dass es jenseits dieser Faktoren Freiheitsgrade für jeden Menschen gibt, selbstbestimmt zu leben und sich auch während der späteren Jahre seines Lebenslaufs zu verändern (siehe Roberts & Yoon, 2023). Somit haben auch Nachfolgerinnen und Nachfolger Jesu die Möglichkeit, den Heiligen Geistes nicht nur passiv an sich wirken zu lassen, sondern ihm aktiv und kontinuierlich Raum durch geistliche Übungen zu geben. Das eine darf jedoch das andere nicht ersetzen.

Wie kann dem Wirken des Heiligen Geistes durch regelmäßige geistliche Übungen Raum gegeben werden? In dem Sammelband von Chandler (2016) zeigen die Autoren die Vielfalt der menschlichen Erfahrungsräume auf, in denen der Heilige Geist wirksam werden kann. Menschen, die kontemplatives Bibellesen und Gebet praktizieren, haben gute Erfahrungen mit dem regelmäßigen Rückzug in die Stille gemacht. Andere betonen im Gebet die emotionale Nähe zum Vaterherzen Gottes, versuchen im hörenden Gebet auf die Stimme des Heiligen Geistes zu hören oder schätzen die aufbauende Rolle des gemeinsamen Gesangs in Lobpreisgottesdiensten. Die Zelebrierung und Feier des Sakraments der Eucharistie ist besonders für katholische Gläubige ein heiliger Ort der Transformation durch den Heiligen Geist, bei dem die Einheit mit Christus erlebt wird.

forgiveness, lament, hope and fear. These challenging authentic disciplines cannot normally be used by sinful people on their own for effective self-optimization or degenerate into legalistic training like the traditional spiritual disciplines. They are a very important addition to our spiritual development, which is summed up in a quote from Foster in Tan (2019, 38): "God brings them into our life when he wills and as he wills ... This is a God-ordained spirituality, dependent on his sovereignty. ... There's no pride left when God takes me through a time of suffering. There is no self-righteousness when I am called to wait. There is no religiosity when I am truly mourning. This is a spirituality I can't control, I can't initiate, I can't bring about. It is a radical dependence on God's husbandry. All I can do is try to appreciate it and learn from it."

The Anglican psychologist and theologian Joanna Collicutt has written an insightful and at the same time biblically based book on the psychology of character formation (Collicutt, 2015). She points out important aspects of spiritual formation, of which I would like to mention just two. (1) Spiritual formation concerns us all. As mentioned earlier, it is important to remember that spiritual formation of character is necessary for Christians at all stages of growth. This is especially true for spiritual leaders. They should be vigilant not to proudly expose themselves with their gifts or think they are better than others. They should remember that there are a multitude of other gifts that the Holy Spirit gives. They are qualitatively indistinguishable from the prominent public gifts mentioned above. (2). Spiritual formation is a communal task. The Holy Spirit came upon the first Christians in Jerusalem as a whole, but with individually divided tongues of fire upon each individual disciple. We recognize a collective and a personal individuality in this. When developing our personal spirituality, we should therefore also be careful not to isolate ourselves from our fellow Christians in the body of Jesus and drive forward our self-optimization. In the spiritual community of churches and small groups, we can serve one another, for "through each one the Spirit is revealed for the benefit of all" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Einige Autoren betonen auch die Wirkung von traumatischen Lebensereignissen oder Leidenserfahrungen für die Transformation des christlichen Charakters, die schon von Psalmisten erwähnt wurden und von Johannes vom Kreuz als „dunkle Nacht der Seele“ bezeichnet wurden. Paleo-orthodoxe und liturgische Bewegungen versuchen an kirchengeschichtlich alte Frömmigkeitsstile anzuknüpfen. Auch die protestantische Spiritual Formation-Bewegung greift seit den neunzehnsiebziger Jahren auf geistliche Übungswege zurück, die schon vor vielen Jahrhunderten in den Klöstern verschiedener Ordensgemeinschaften gepflegt wurden. Einen exzellenten Überblick über die Vielzahl dieser geistlichen Übungen bietet das Handbuch von Calhoun (2015).

In den evangelikalen Kirchen der USA hat die Spiritual Formation-Bewegung seit den neunzehnsiebziger Jahren zwei Fundament des christlichen Glaubens neu freigelegt, - die Pflege der persönlichen Beziehung zu Gott und die Umgestaltung der Gläubigen in das Bild Jesu Christi. Autoren wie Dallas Willard und Richard Foster haben dabei auf klassische geistliche Übungen aus zurückliegenden Traditionen der Christenheit zurückgegriffen wie die Lectio divina oder die Ignatianischen Exerzitien.

Der Theologe und Psychologe Sian-Yang Tan weist auf verschiedene Kategorien von geistlichen Übungen (Disziplinen) hin, die von den genannten Autoren vorgeschlagen werden. So unterscheidet Dallas Willard Disziplinen der Abstinenz wie Einsamkeit, Ruhe, Keuschheit und Fasten von Disziplinen des Engagements wie Bibelstudium, Lobpreis, Dienen und Gemeinschaft. Ähnlich gliedert Richard Foster seine 12 geistlichen Disziplinen in die drei Gruppe der nach außen gerichteten Disziplinen, der nach innen gerichteten Disziplinen und der gemeinsamen Disziplinen. Vielleicht noch wichtiger ist aber ein weiterer Hinweis. Außer diesen in der christlichen Tradition bekannten Disziplinen haben nach Foster die sogenannten authentischen Disziplinen entscheidenden Anteil im Leben von Christen. Sie können nicht ausgewählt werden. Über sie gibt es keine Kontrolle. Sie widerfahren uns als Herausforderung Gottes.

Collicutt develops a program for character development that she explicitly understands as cultivating the fruit of the Spirit.

She begins by analyzing the character of Jesus of Nazareth. Using the tools of scientific psychology, she attempts to support the reader's self-awareness and self-knowledge. In the main part of her book, she motivates her readers to draw strength from their encounter with God and to support it with spiritual exercises. Cultivating this fruit of the Spirit manifests itself in Christ-like character traits such as

- Humble Power: Having the Mind of Christ
- Heaven in Ordinary: Watching and Praying
- Personal Coherence: Getting the Balance Right
- Hospitality: Visiting and Welcoming
- Compassion: Seeing, Feeling, Doing
- Not Retaliating: Forgiveness
- Wisdom: Inhabiting Uncertainty with Confidence (see Collicutt, 2015).

The Anglican theologian Graham Tomlin also referred to the transformative power of spiritual training programs in the title of his book "Spiritual Fitness". Only the persistent practice of a sport or physiotherapeutic training produces positive physical or psychosomatic effects. Fitness does not come from reading a lifestyle book or listening to an influencer podcast. Regular exercise is required. It is similar with the development of a Christian lifestyle, which should produce positive character traits as a holistic fruit of the spirit. Churches and congregations could become spiritual fitness centers that support their members in practicing spiritual exercises. Christians should not be lone warriors in their character development. Above all, house groups, small groups or cell groups - whatever you call them - are of great importance. "Most growing churches and congregations have such spiritual core cells. They meet in private homes to learn together, seek the face of God and prepare missionary activities. They are door openers to a life in the Spirit. They promote the growth of personal virtue and wisdom [...] Such Christian cells can become holiness schools that enable Christians to live lives of purity and sanctification" (Tomlin, 2019, pages 175-176).

Dazu gehören Warten, Leiden, Verfolgung, Barmherzigkeit, Vergebung, Klagen, Hoffnung und Angst. Diese herausfordernden authentischen Disziplinen können normalerweise nicht wie die traditionellen geistlichen Disziplinen in Eigenregie von sündigen Menschen zur effektiven Selbstoptimierung eingesetzt werden oder zu gesetzlichem Training degenerieren. Sie sind eine sehr wichtige Ergänzung in unserer geistlichen Entwicklung, die in einem Zitat von Foster in Tan (2019, 38) auf den Punkt gebracht werden: „God brings them into our life when he wills and as he wills ... This is a God-ordained spirituality, dependent on his sovereignty. ... There's no pride left when God takes me through a time of suffering. There is no self-righteousness when I am called to wait. There is no religiosity when I am truly mourning. This is a spirituality I can't control, I can't initiate, I can't bring about. It is a radical dependence on God's husbandry. All I can do is try to appreciate it and learn from it.“

Die anglikanische Psychologin und Theologin Joanna Collicutt hat ein einfühlsames und zugleich biblisch fundiertes Buch über die Psychologie der Charakterformung geschrieben (Collicutt, 2015). Sie weist auf wichtige Aspekte der geistlichen Formung hin, von denen ich nur zwei nennen möchte. (1) Geistliche Formung geht uns alle an. Wie schon erwähnt muss immer wieder daran erinnert werden, dass die geistliche Formung des Charakters für Christen in allen Wachstumsphasen notwendig ist. Dies gilt besonders auch für geistliche Leiter. Sie sollten wachsam sein, sich mit ihren Gaben nicht stolz zu exponieren oder sich für etwas Besseres zu halten. Sie sollten sich daran erinnern, dass es eine Vielzahl von anderen Gaben gibt, die der Heilige Geist schenkt. Sie sind qualitativ nicht zu unterscheiden von den erwähnten herausgehobenen öffentlichen Gaben. (2) Geistliche Formung ist eine Gemeinschaftsaufgabe. Der Heilige Geist kam auf die ersten Christen in Jerusalem als Gesamtheit, aber mit individuell geteilten Zungen aus Feuer auf jeden einzelnen Jünger. Wir erkennen daran eine kollektive und eine persönliche Individualität. Auch bei der Entwicklung unserer persönlichen Spiritualität sollten wir deshalb darauf achten, uns nicht von unseren Mitschwestern am Leib Jesus abzu-

John Mark Comer and his fellow members of the Practicing the Way initiative have built a digital spiritual gym that can accompany and support the spiritual formation of character in following Jesus (<https://www.practicingtheway.org/>). He draws on the spiritual exercises of the Church Fathers and representatives of the Spiritual Formation movement, but also quotes new psychological literature on building habits. The aim of the training program is to lead people to a biblical lifestyle that can withstand the distractions and challenges of everyday life. The aim is to maintain perseverance during the long training phases of character formation and to take into account the individual spiritual temperaments of each person. Comer therefore recommends the formulation of a specific rule of life. It should help the followers of Jesus to find the core spiritual practices that suit them in a good life balance, for example Sabbath, silence and seclusion, prayer, fasting, Bible reading, fellowship, generosity, and mercy service (Comer, 2024, pp. 216-227).

4.3. Interactions between God's action and spiritual training

How can a Christian who is willing to change cooperate with the active forces of the Holy Spirit? The fact that God's action through the Holy Spirit must be accompanied by the willingness of Christians to undergo spiritual training is accepted in the majority of Christian churches. However, there is also a recurring tension as to how the contribution of the Holy Spirit and the initiative and constancy of man should be weighted.

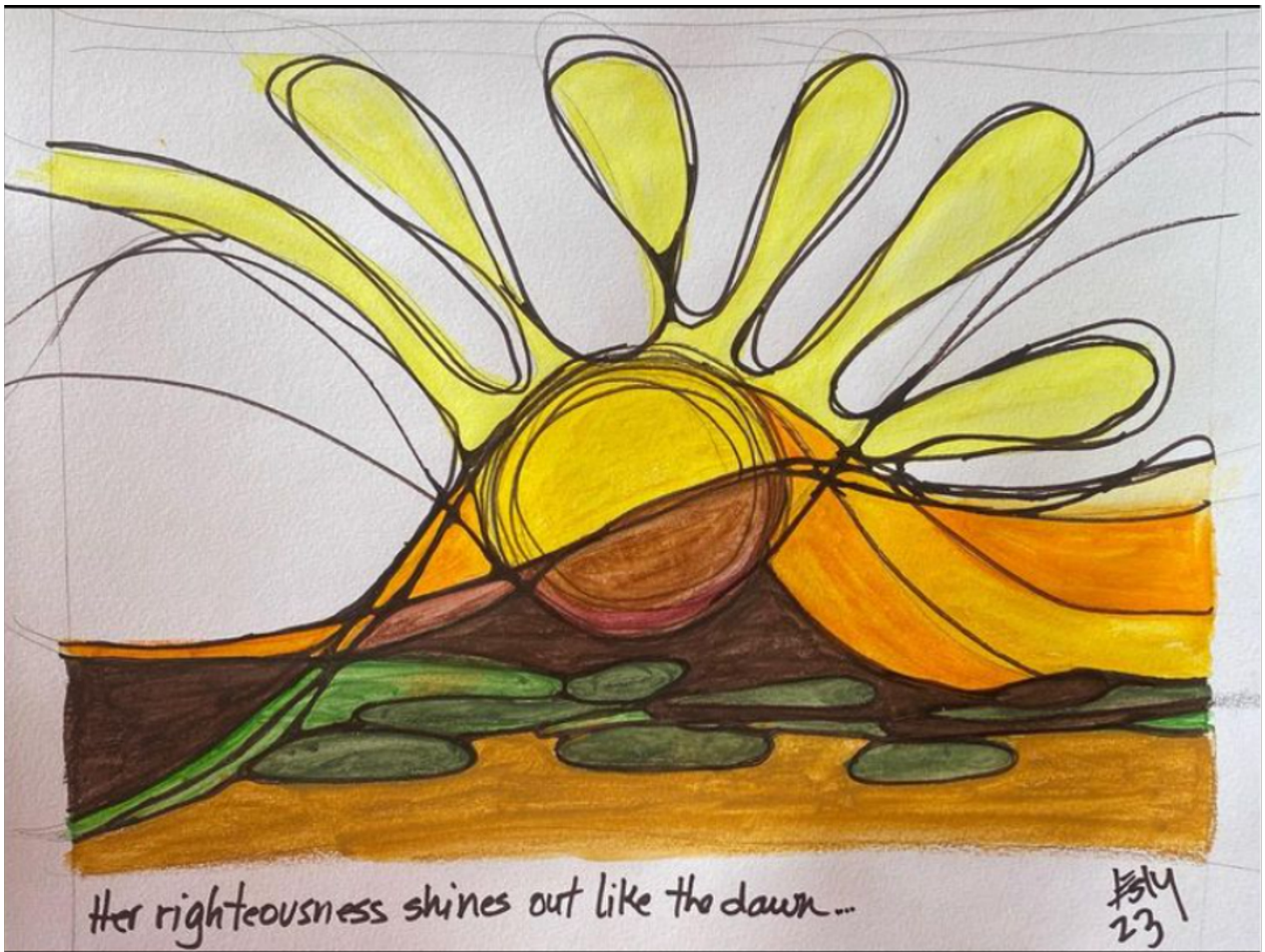
In this context, can we speak of man's cooperation with the Holy Spirit? There are a number of biblical arguments in favor of this. Here I follow an argument by Joanna Collicutt, who points to the example of the Virgin Mary, who entered into active cooperation with the Holy Spirit at the birth of Jesus. The process of discipleship can also be understood as cooperation, because a disciple intentionally allows himself to be shaped by the Master in his presence and practices patterns of behavior. Paul explicitly refers to the idea of cooperation when he writes in Romans 8:15 that believers have not received a spirit of slavery. In doing so, he makes it clear

kapseln und unsere Selbstoptimierung voranzutreiben. In der geistlichen Gemeinschaft von Gemeinden und Kleingruppen können wir uns gegenseitig dienen, denn „durch einen jeden offenbart sich der Geist zum Nutzen aller“ (1. Korinther 12, 7).

Collicutt entwickelt ein Programm zur Charakterentwicklung, das sie explizit als Kultivierung der Frucht des Heiligen Geistes versteht. Sie beginnt mit einer Analyse des Charakters von Jesus von Nazareth. Mit den Mitteln der wissenschaftlichen Psychologie versucht sie die Eigenwahrnehmung und Selbsterkenntnis der Leser zu unterstützen. Im Hauptteil ihres Buches motiviert sie ihre Leser, aus der Gottesbegegnung Kräfte zu schöpfen und mit geistlichen Übungen zu unterstützen. Die Kultivierung dieser Frucht des Geistes zeigt sich in Christusähnlichen Charaktereigenschaften wie

- Demütige Kraft: Mit dem Geist Christi leben
- Der Himmel im Alltag: Beobachten und Beten
- Persönliche Kohärenz: Das richtige Gleichgewicht finden
- Gastfreundschaft: Besuchen und Willkommen heißen
- Mitgefühl: Sehen, Fühlen, Handeln
- Keine Vergeltung: Vergebung
- Weisheit: Unsicherheit mit Zuversicht ertragen (siehe Collicutt, 2015).

Auch der anglikanische Theologe Graham Tomlin hat mit dem Titel seines Buchs „Spiritual Fitness“ auf die verändernde Kraft von geistlichen Trainingsprogrammen hingewiesen. Nur das ausdauernde Üben einer Sportart oder eines physiotherapeutischen Trainings bringen positive körperliche oder psychosomatische Effekte hervor. Fitness entsteht nicht durch das Lesen eines Lifestyle-Buchs oder eines Influencer podcasts. Regelmäßige Übungen sind gefragt. Ähnlich ist es mit der Entwicklung eines christlichen Lebensstils, der positive Charaktereigenschaften als ganzheitliche Frucht des Geistes hervorbringen soll. Kirchen und Gemeinden könnten zu geistlichen Fitness-Centern werden, die ihre Mitglieder dabei unterstützen, geistliche Übungen zu praktizieren. Christen sollten in ihrer Charakterentwicklung keine Einzelkämpfer sein. Vor allem Hauskreise, Kleingruppen



Her righteousness shines out like the dawn...

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that God's spirit does not overpower an unwilling person, but waits for their consent. In spiritual exercises, it is primarily the Holy Spirit who works, but together with the human spirit. "The Spirit does not take us over: we are not possessed or colonized. Instead, says Paul, the Spirit works in cooperation with our human spirit. I do not become Christ-like because Christ has somehow jackbooted his way in my life and taken it over. I become Christ-like by ... cooperating with the Spirit in a jointly owned work of personal transformation." (Collicutt 2015, p. 54)

Tomlin (2024) discusses another nuance of cooperation with the Holy Spirit. He cites the Holy Spirit's changing of our desires as a central factor in this, which was already addressed by the preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), who played a significant role in the revival movement of the First Great Awakening. Edwards tried to unravel the mystery of human inclinations through which the Holy Spirit initiates the transformation of character, especially in the book on Religious Affections published in 1746, which is available in a revised edition in modern English (Edwards, 2023; see also Stahle (2019).

In an excellent book, the Catholic theologian and philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand argues in a similar way to Edwards. The prerequisite for "Transformation in Christ", according to the title, is the Christian's complete, unlimited willingness to change, but also its continuity: But, in addition to readiness of change, more is needed: a glowing desire to become a new man in Christ; a passionate will to give oneself over to Christ. And this again, presupposes a state of fluidity, as it were: that we should be like soft wax, ready to receive the imprint of the features of Christ. ... Continuity is a prime condition of spiritual growth, and even more, of transformation in Christ; and that stands in no opposition to the will to become another man. Without continuity, on the contrary, there could be no genuine responsiveness to the formative claim of Christ. ... Only we must always remain changeable in the sense of remaining, upon each level securely attained, susceptible of ascent towards yet higher levels along the path of trans-

pen oder Zellgruppen – wie immer man sie nennt – kommt eine große Bedeutung zu. „Die meisten wachsenden Kirchen und Gemeinden haben solche geistlichen Kernzellen. Sie treffen sich in privaten Wohnungen, um gemeinsam zu lernen, das Angesicht Gottes zu suchen und missionarische Aktivitäten vorzubereiten. Sie sind Türöffner zu einem Leben im Geist. Sie fördern das Wachsen persönlicher Tugend und Weisheit [...] Solche christlichen Zellen können Heiligkeitsschulen werden, die Christen fähig machen, ein Leben der Reinheit und Heiligung zu führen“ (Tomlin, 2019, Seiten 175-176).

John Mark Comer hat mit seinen Mitstreitern der Initiative Practicing the Way einen digitalen geistlichen Fitnessraum aufgebaut, der die geistliche Formung des Charakters in der Jesus-Nachfolge begleiten und unterstützen kann (<https://www.practicingtheway.org/>). Er greift dabei auf die geistlichen Übungen der Kirchenväter und Vertreter der Spiritual Formation-Bewegung zurück, zitiert aber auch neue psychologische Literatur zum Aufbau von Gewohnheiten. Ziel des Trainingsprogramms ist es, Menschen zu einem biblischen Lebensstil zu führen, der den Ablenkungen und Herausforderungen des Alltags standhält. Dabei sollen die Ausdauer in den langen Trainingsphasen der Charakterbildung erhalten bleiben und die individuellen geistlichen Temperamente jeder Person berücksichtigt werden. Comer empfiehlt deswegen die Formulierung einer eigenen Lebensregel. Sie soll den Nachfolgern Jesu helfen, in einer guten Lebensbalance die für ihn geeigneten geistlichen Kernpraktiken zu finden, zum Beispiel Sabbat, Stille und Abgeschiedenheit, Gebet, Fasten, Bibellese, Gemeinschaft, Großzügigkeit und Barmherzigkeitsdienste (Comer, 2024, Seiten 216-227).

4.3. Wechselwirkungen zwischen Gottes Handeln und geistlichem Training

Wie gelingt eine Kooperation des veränderungsbereiten Christen mit den Wirkkräften des Heiligen Geistes? Dass Gottes Handeln durch den Heiligen Geist durch die Bereitschaft von Christen zum geistlichen Training begleitet werden muss, wird in der Mehrheit der christlichen Kirchen akzeptiert. Es ist allerdings auch eine immer wiederkehrende Spannung festzu-

formation into Christ” (Hildebrand, 2001/1940, Ch. 1). Hildebrand contrasts this supernatural élan of development with two negative basic attitudes, the lazy letting oneself go and the proud, violent screwing oneself up. Both attitudes block the willingness to change.

It will probably always remain a mystery how the Holy Spirit orchestrates our willingness to change, our will and our motivation, as Paul emphasizes in Philippians chapter 2 verse 13: “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure”. Nevertheless, it would be worthwhile to compare Edward's and von Hildebrand's theological taxonomies with the conceptual network of today's scientific psychology, to update it and to develop hypotheses from it that can be tested in studies on the psychology of religion.

In conclusion, however, it should be emphasized once again that it is not a person's efforts that produce the spiritual fruit of Jesus-likeness, but the Holy Spirit. He can also sovereignly and unexpectedly bring about changes in character beyond all spiritual exercises. For this reason, Christians should allow Him to fill them daily (Ephesians 5:18) and live in harmony with Him (Galatians 5:16).

5. Plea for cooperation between theology and positive psychology

If we compare a widely used model of spiritual formation such as that of Calhoun (2014), the analogies with positive psychology models of well-being are obvious. Many spiritual exercises from Christian traditions show a number of astonishing structural overlaps with so-called positive interventions used in positive psychology to improve human well-being. Positive emotions are usually seen as the mechanism of action. Since the powerful turnaround in scientific psychology in the USA at the beginning of the second millennium, countless empirical studies have demonstrated the effects of so-called positive interventions on well-being (Seligman, 2005; Carr et al., 2020).

Gratitude rituals (diary, app, letter, etc.) are among the most studied interventions. According to many empirical gratitude researchers,

stellen, wie der Beitrag der Heiligen Geistes und die Initiative und die Beständigkeit des Menschen gewichtet werden sollen.

Darf man in diesem Zusammenhang von einer Kooperation des Menschen mit dem Heiligen Geist sprechen? Eine Reihe biblischer Belege sprechen dafür. Ich folge hier einer Argumentation von Joanna Collicutt, die auf das Beispiel der Jungfrau Maria hinweist, die eine aktive Kooperation mit dem Heiligen Geist bei der Geburt Jesu einging. Auch der Prozess der Jüngerschaft lässt sich als Kooperation verstehen, weil sich ein Jünger mit voller Absicht in der Gegenwart des Meisters von ihm prägen lässt und Verhaltensmuster einübt. Explizit weist Paulus auf den Gedanken der Kooperation hin, wenn er in Römer 8, 15 schreibt, dass Gläubige nicht einen Geist der Sklaverei empfangen hätten. Damit macht er deutlich, dass Gottes Geist nicht einen willenlosen Menschen überwältigt, sondern auf sein Einverständnis wartet. Bei geistlichen Übungen arbeitet primär der Heilige Geist, aber zusammen mit dem menschlichen Geist. „The Spirit does not take us over: we are not possessed or colonized. Instead, says Paul, the Spirit works in cooperation with our human spirit. I do not become Christ-like because Christ has somehow jackbooted his way in my life and taken it over. I become Christ-like by ... cooperating with the Spirit in a jointly owned work of personal transformation” (Collicutt 2015, Seite 54).

Eine andere Nuance der Kooperation mit dem Heiligen Geist diskutiert Tomlin (2024). Als zentralen Wirkfaktor nennt er die Änderung unserer Wünsche durch den Heiligen Geist, den schon der Prediger und Theologe Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) thematisierte, der eine bedeutende Rolle in der Erweckungsbewegung des First Great Awakening hatte. Edwards versuchte dem Geheimnis der menschlichen Neigungen auf die Spur zu kommen, durch die der Heilige Geist die Veränderung des Charakters anstößt, vor allem in dem 1746 veröffentlichten Buch über Religious Affections, das in einer überarbeiteten Ausgabe in modernem Englisch vorliegt (Edwards, 2023; siehe auch Stahle (2019).

gratitude is a two-stage process. The perception of the positive is followed by recognition of the source. In many gratitude rituals, the focus remains on the positive things or events without recognizing the source of gratitude, which can relate to people, natural forces or spiritual causes. Gratitude exercises in a Christian context are explicitly directed towards God as the creator and giver of good gifts.

They have a structural similarity to secular interventions, but have many interesting differences, which have been published in several studies in the important specialist journal *The Journal of Positive Psychology*.

Zagano & Gillespie (2006) have already clearly worked out how gratitude exercises in self-optimizing lifestyle training differ from Christian-influenced gratitude exercises from the perspective of Ignatian spirituality. Exercises, inspired by positive psychology aim to achieve personal happiness, strengthen positive relationships and support the development of a person's signature strengths. In principle, there is nothing wrong with this. However, the pursuit of a permanent state of happiness can easily produce dark character traits of self-centeredness. Christian spirituality, on the other hand, focuses on serving God and his creation and is based on the values of the Bible. Gratitude has completely different nuances of meaning here. It is not directed at people or an impersonal universe, but at God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Many years later, an empirical study by Newman, Nezlek & Tay (2024) investigated how general gratitude and gratitude to God affect personal well-being.

If you examine the virtue catalog of positive psychology, you will actually find spirituality and transcendence as the 6th core virtue. Compared to the biblical core virtues, however, this definition encompasses a much wider range of meanings. For example, it includes humor, enthusiasm and hope, but omits specifically Christian virtues such as fear of God due to its cross-cultural and cross-religious orientation.

The authors summarize: "The key point of convergence here with Ignatian spirituality is the notion of profound gratitude.

Der katholische Theologe und Philosoph Dietrich von Hildebrand argumentiert in einem exzellenten Buch ähnlich wie Edwards. Voraussetzung für „Die Umgestaltung in Christus“, so der Titel, sei die restlose, unbegrenzte Veränderungsbereitschaft des Christen, aber auch ihre Kontinuität: „Ja, es muss nicht nur die Veränderungsbereitschaft vorliegen, sondern auch die glühende Sehnsucht, ein neuer Mensch in Christus zu werden, der leidenschaftliche Wille, sich selbst abzusterben und in Christus umgestalten zu lassen, der ein Flüssigsein des ganzen Wesens voraussetzt, der einschließt, dass wir weiches Wachs sind, in das das Antlitz Christi eingeprägt werden kann ... Die Kontinuität ist eine unerlässliche Grundlage alles inneren Wachstums und erst recht der Umgestaltung in Christus. Es gilt nun zu verstehen, dass sie mit der echten Veränderungsbereitschaft in keinerlei Widerspruch steht. Das Flüssigsein und die Formbarkeit durch Christus setzt vielmehr die Kontinuität voraus. ... Wir müssen immer veränderlich in dem Sinn bleiben, dass wir auf der schon erreichten Stufe noch für weitere Stufen der Umgestaltung in Christus formbar bleiben“ (Hildebrand, 1940, Seiten 15 und 22). Hildebrand stellt diesem übernatürlichen Elan der Entfaltung zwei negative Grundhaltungen entgegen, das träge, faule Sich-Hängenlassen und das stolze gewaltsame Sich-Hinaufschrauben. Beide Haltungen blockieren die Veränderungsbereitschaft.

Es wird wohl immer ein Geheimnis bleiben, wie der Heilige Geist unsere Veränderungsbereitschaft, unseren Willen und unsere Motivation orchestriert wie es Paulus im Philipperbrief in Kapitel 2 Vers 13 betont: Denn Gott ist's, der in euch wirkt beides, das Wollen und das Vollbringen, nach seinem Wohlgefallen. Gleichwohl wäre es aber lohnenswert, theologische Taxonomien von Edwards und von Hildebrands mit dem Begriffsnetzwerk der heutigen wissenschaftlichen Psychologie zu vergleichen, zu aktualisieren und daraus Hypothesen zu entwickeln, die in religionspsychologischen Studien überprüft werden können.

Abschließend ist aber noch einmal zu betonen, dass nicht Anstrengungen eines Menschen die geistliche Frucht der Jesus-Ähnlichkeit hervor-

Positive Psychology focuses on gratitude to one person. But the Spiritual Exercises, though they certainly direct exercitants towards the recognition of personal interdependence in their lives, do so within a wider context of gratitude to God. While Seligman's research shows that the most grateful people are the happiest people, Christian spirituality usually recognizes the most grateful people as the holiest people. The difference between the two, of course, is belief in the centrality of God in personal existence" (Zagano & Gillespie, 2006, p. 49).

Despite these obvious differences in goals and the different emphasis on a personal relationship with God compared to open transcendent spirituality, there are many productive areas of cooperation between theology and psychology. Not only have there been countless attempts at understanding between psychology and Christianity for many decades, but there have also been successful cooperation projects in the area of cultivating personal spirituality, coaching, pastoral care, spiritual care and psychotherapy. A central meta-topic remains the degree of integration of psychological knowledge into the above-mentioned Christian professions. The answers to the question of the degree of integration can vary, as a comparison of the positions of four top experts shows (see Johnson & Jones, 2000).

Many attempts to reach an understanding have failed due to terminological ambiguity. Obviously, different images of man and God as well as different methods have made the dialog between theology and psychology more difficult. However, there is still a lack of precision in the description and explanation of the dynamics of change in the lives of Christians, even within the Christian professional groups themselves. Depending on the perspective of application, different terms are used for basically identical processes and personality traits, each of which sets individual theological accents or emphasizes perspectives of application.

The final aim, however, is to find points of reference in secular psychology, especially in positive psychology, for the concepts of change in the lives of Christians that are widespread in many

bringen, sondern der Heilige Geist. Er kann auch jenseits aller geistlichen Übungen souverän und unerwartet Charakterveränderungen bewirken. Aus diesem Grund sollten Christen sich täglich von ihm füllen lassen (Epheser 5, 18) und im Gleichklang mit ihm leben (Galater 5, 16).

5. Plädoyer für die Kooperation zwischen Theologie und positiver Psychologie

Vergleichen wir ein weit verbreitetes Modell der geistlichen Formung (Spiritual Formation) wie das von Calhoun (2014), so liegen die Analogien zu Modellen der Positiven Psychologie zum gelingenden Leben (well-being) auf der Hand. Viele geistliche Übungen aus christlichen Traditionen weisen eine Reihe erstaunlicher struktureller Überlappungen mit sogenannten positiven Interventionen auf, die in der Positiven Psychologie eingesetzt werden, um das menschliche Wohlbefinden zu verbessern. Als Wirkmechanismus werden dabei meist positive Emotionen angesehen. Seit der kraftvollen Wende in der wissenschaftlichen Psychologie der USA zu Beginn des zweiten Jahrtausends haben unzählige empirische Studien belegt, welche Auswirkungen sogenannte positive Interventionen für das Wohlbefinden haben (Seligman, 2005; Carr et al., 2020).

Zu den am meisten untersuchten Interventionen gehören Dankbarkeitsrituale (Tagebuch, App, Brief, etc.). Dankbarkeit ist nach Meinung vieler empirischer Dankbarkeitsforscher ein zweistufiger Prozess. Die Wahrnehmung des Positiven folgt die Anerkennung der Quelle. In vielen Dankbarkeitsritualen bleibt es bei dem Festhalten der positiven Dinge oder Ereignisse, ohne die Quelle des Dankes wahrzunehmen, die sich auf Personen, Naturkräfte oder spirituelle Verursacher beziehen kann. Dankbarkeitsübungen im christlichen Kontext richten sich explizit an Gott als Schöpfer und Geber guter Gaben. Sie haben eine strukturelle Ähnlichkeit mit säkularen Interventionen, weisen aber viele interessante Unterschiede auf, die in mehreren Studien in der wichtigen Fachzeitschrift *The Journal of Positive Psychology* erschienen sind

Wie sich von Dankbarkeitsübungen in selbstoptimierenden Lifestyle-Trainings von christlich

Western churches and congregations. In his inaugural address as President of the American Psychological Association in 1998, Martin Seligman initiated this change. From the outset, positive psychology was not a naive happyology of positive thinking. Its scientific claim was and is to provide evidence-based recommendations for one's own lifestyle and for positive coaching and positive therapies on the basis of empirical studies.

Positive psychology has gone beyond the causes and treatment of mental disorders to focus on positive emotions and character traits. It has focused on the living conditions and institutions that enable people to lead successful, meaningful lives. This process has been given the term Flourishing. Flourishing stands for a process in which people can realize their potential and at the same time experience a high level of mental health and psychological well-being. Seligman's PERMA model has been much discussed and studied, in which the following factors contribute significantly to well-being: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. In the later version of the PERMA+ model, these were supplemented by vitality factors such as exercise, nutrition and sleep. Lomas, Pawelski, & VanderWeele (2024) also succeeded in creating an up-to-date map for the network of further meaning components of "flourishing".

Positive psychology has now established itself in psychological research, therapy and coaching in many countries around the world. It has developed new balanced research programs in the second and third waves of positive psychology. The second wave explicitly considered the life-shaping value of challenging negative life events. In particular, Paul Wong's Existential Positive Psychology, inspired by logotherapy and Christian values, should be mentioned here. Wong proposes the concept of chaironic happiness. It differs from short-lived hedonic happiness because it is perceived as a blessing from God and is associated with reverence, gratitude and oneness with him. In the long term, this can lead to so-called mature happiness. Wong describes mature happiness as a person's inner harmony, which is achieved when a person can

geprägtem Dankbarkeitsübungen unterscheiden, haben schon Zagano & Gillespie (2006) aus der Perspektive einer Ignatianischen Spiritualität klar herausgearbeitet. Von der Positiven Psychologie inspirierte Übungen zielen darauf ab, persönliches Glück zu erreichen, positive Beziehungen zu stärken und die Entwicklung der Signaturstärken einer Person zu unterstützen. Dagegen ist im Prinzip nichts einzuwenden. Das Streben nach dauerhaften Glückszuständen kann aber leicht dunkle Charaktereigenschaften der Selbstzentrierung hervorbringen. Christliche Spiritualität richtet sich dagegen darauf, Gott und seiner Schöpfung zu dienen und orientiert sich an den Werten der Bibel. Dankbarkeit hat hier völlig andere Bedeutungsnuancen. Sie richtet sich nicht an Menschen oder an ein unpersönliches Universum, sondern an Gott, den Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde. Wie sich allgemeine Dankbarkeit von einer Dankbarkeit gegenüber Gott auf das persönliche Wohlbefinden auswirken, wurde viele Jahre später in einer empirischen Studie von Newman, Nezlek & Tay (2024) untersucht.

Prüft man den Tugendkatalog der Positiven Psychologie, so findet man dort tatsächlich als 6. Kerntugend Spiritualität und Transzendenz. Verglichen mit den biblischen Kerntugenden umfasst diese Definition aber einen weitaus größeren Bedeutungsraum. Sie schließt zum Beispiel Humor, Enthusiasmus und Hoffnung ein, verzichtet aber wegen ihrer kultur- und religionsübergreifenden Ausrichtung auf spezifisch christliche Tugenden wie Gottesfurcht.

Zusammenfassend halten die Autoren fest: "The key point of convergence here with Ignatian spirituality is the notion of profound gratitude. Positive Psychology focuses on gratitude to one person. But the Spiritual Exercises, though they certainly direct exercitants towards the recognition of personal interdependence in their lives, do so within a wider context of gratitude to God. While Seligman's research shows that the most grateful people are the happiest people, Christian spirituality usually recognises the most grateful people as the holiest people. The difference between the two, of course, is belief in the centrality of God in personal existence" (Zagano & Gillespie, 2006, p. 49).



balance the positive and negative aspects of life, accept their own strengths and weaknesses and embrace their vulnerability. This includes painful feelings, personal burdens and the fragility of human existence. The Mature Happiness Scale MHS by Wong and Bowers can be used to measure mature happiness. The construct differs from other life satisfaction questionnaires, which primarily measure self-centeredness, self-optimization and control. A revised form of the MHS was used together with Martin Seligman's PERMA profiler in a cross-cultural study. It proved to be a reliable measurement instrument for assessing the happiness of adults (Carreno et al. 2023). Finally, the third wave of positive psychology should be mentioned, which expanded the subject area contextually, culturally and ethically and integrated new qualitative and computational research methods (Lomas et al., 2021).

Changes in personality and character can be observed in every person's life. New studies in life course-related personality psychology show that although there are stable personality traits, changes are also possible into old age (Roberts & Yoon, 2024). The spiritual development of Christians is also subject to a lifelong dynamic. It has always been a topic of responsible, reflective pastoral counseling, pastoral care and psychotherapy. The aforementioned Anglican psychologist and theologian Joanna Collicutt has already been able to derive useful didactic application principles for her program for Christian character change from many relevant studies in psychology (see Collicutt, 2015).

If you analyze the list of positive character traits in positive psychology (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), you will notice many similarities and overlaps with the catalogs of virtues in the Bible, such as those listed by the Apostle Paul in his 9 catalogs of virtues, for example in Galatians 4:8 or as the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, chastity". However, it should be noted that positive psychology differs from the Bible in its view of man and God. Tan points

Trotz dieser offenkundigen Zielunterschiede und der unterschiedlichen Gewichtung einer personalen Gottesbeziehung im Vergleich zu offener transzendenter Spiritualität gibt es viele produktive Kooperationsfelder zwischen Theologie und Psychologie. Es gibt seit vielen Jahrzehnten nicht nur unzählige Verständigungsversuche zwischen Psychologie und Christentum, sondern auch gelungene Kooperationsprojekte im Bereich der Pflege der persönlichen Spiritualität, im Coaching, in der Seelsorge, in spiritual care und der Psychotherapie. Ein zentrales Metathema bleibt dabei der Grad der Integration psychologischen Wissens in die oben genannten christlich geprägten Berufsgruppen. Die Antworten auf die Frage nach dem Grad der Integration kann verschieden ausfallen, wie es ein Vergleich der Positionen von vier Top-Experten zeigt (siehe Johnson & Jones, 2000).

Viele Verständigungsversuche sind an terminologischer Unklarheit gescheitert. Offenkundig haben vor allem unterschiedliche Menschen- und Gottesbilder sowie unterschiedliche Methoden den Dialog zwischen Theologie und Psychologie erschwert. Nach wie vor gibt es aber auch innerhalb der christlichen Berufsgruppen selbst eine fehlende Präzision in der Beschreibung und Erklärung der Veränderungsdynamik im Leben von Christen. Je nach der Anwendungsperspektive werden für im Grunde identische Prozesse und Persönlichkeitsmerkmale unterschiedliche Begriffe verwendet, die jeweils einzelne theologische Akzente setzen oder Anwendungsperspektiven betonen.

Ziel ist es nun aber abschließend, für die in vielen westlichen Kirchen und Gemeinden verbreiteten Veränderungskonzepte im Leben von Christen Anknüpfungspunkte in der säkularen Psychologie zu finden, vor allem in der Positiven Psychologie. In der Antrittsrede als Präsident der American Psychological Association im Jahr 1998 hat Martin Seligman diesen Wandel eingeleitet. Positive Psychologie war von Anfang an keine naive Happyology des positiven Denkens. Ihr wissenschaftlicher Anspruch war und ist, auf der Grundlage empirischer Studien

out: "Positive psychology does not sufficiently deal with sin, the fallenness of human beings, an evil with its tendency to overemphasize happiness, virtues, and strengths. There is a need, from biblical perspective, to focus more on godly sorrow and repentance (2. Cor. 7, 9-10), or "positive sadness", including suffering and pain, and not only on positive emotion or happiness, and therefore to note the dark side of happiness" (Tan, 2019, p. 43). Jesus' disciples should therefore be aware of their own limitations, weaknesses and imperfections in developing challenging virtues such as humility and modesty.

Mark McMinn points out that research on virtues in positive psychology has been advanced by some outstanding researchers with a Christian background, such as Everett Worthington (forgiveness, humility) and Robert Emmons (gratitude, grace). From a Christian perspective, an important shift in emphasis could be initiated that goes twofold beyond self-centeredness and the individual benefits of virtuous living. Christians honor God with their virtuous lives and turn to their neighbors in his love: "Left on its own, positive psychology tends to settle back to a place of self-interest. I forgive because it's good for me. I practice gratitude because it lowers my blood pressure. I pursue hope because it adds to my quality of life. Me, me, me.

Many scientists fail to see the paradox of how a science of virtue can be twisted to be so very self-centered. And to this the church offers a nudge toward the love of God and neighbor ... When scientists lean toward the personal health effects of virtues, those in the church can nod and remind them of the larger context of virtues as well. Yes, we may live longer if we forgive our foes, but we will also forge stronger communities and encourage others who observe our forgiveness to forgive their foes as well" (McMinn, 2017, 163; 168).

Positive psychology could benefit from a theological foundation for its catalogs of virtues by engaging with the biblical teachings of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Christian pastors, counselors, coaches and psychotherapists, on the other hand, could benefit from differentiated empiri-

evidenzbasierte Empfehlungen für die eigene Lebensführung und für positives Coaching und positive Therapien zu geben.

Die positive Psychologie hat sich über die Ursachen und die Behandlung von psychischen Störungen hinaus mit den positiven Emotionen und Charakterzügen befasst. Sie konzentrierte sich auf die Lebensbedingungen und Institutionen, die Menschen befähigen, ein gelingendes, sinnvolles Leben zu führen. Dieser Prozess wurde mit dem Terminus Flourishing belegt. Flourishing steht für einen Prozess, in dem Menschen ihr Potential realisieren können und gleichzeitig ein hohes Maß an mentaler Gesundheit und psychischem Wohlbefinden erleben. Viel diskutiert und untersucht wurde das PERMA Model von Seligman, in dem die folgenden Faktoren entscheidend zum Wohlbefinden tragen: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships (Beziehungen), Meaning (Sinn) und Accomplishment (Errungenschaften). Sie wurden in der späteren Fassung des Modells PERMA+ durch Vitalitätsfaktoren wie Bewegung, Ernährung und Schlaf ergänzt. Lomas, Pawelski, & VanderWeele (2024) gelang es, darüber hinaus für das Netzwerk weiterer Bedeutungskomponenten von „Flourishing“ eine aktuelle Landkarte zu entwerfen.

Die positive Psychologie hat sich inzwischen weltweit in vielen Ländern in der psychologischen Forschung, in der Therapie und im Coaching etabliert. Sie hat in der zweiten und dritten Welle der Positiven Psychologie neue ausgewogenen Forschungsprogramme entwickelt. Die zweite Welle berücksichtigte explizit den lebensformenden Wert herausfordernder negativer Lebensereignisse. Hier ist vor allem die von der Logotherapie und von christlichen Werten inspirierte Existentielle Positive Psychologie von Paul Wong zu nennen. Wong schlägt das Konzept des chaironischen Glücks (chaironic happiness) vor. Es unterscheidet sich von dem kurzlebigen hedonischen Glück (hedonic happiness), weil es als Segenswirkung Gottes empfunden wird und mit Ehrfurcht, Dankbarkeit und Einssein mit ihm verbunden ist. Langfristig kann das zu dem sogenannten reifen Glück (mature happiness) führen. Wong beschreibt das reife Glück als innere Harmonie ei-

cal process models of virtue development and use them to develop evidence-based spiritual training programs. An outstanding example of such transfer effects is the science of forgiveness developed by Everett Worthington. Forgiveness has amazingly positive effects on individual health well-being and social relationships. The REACH model is based on five phases of forgiveness. The acronym REACH stands for the following sequence of steps: R = Recall the hurt, E = Empathize with your partner, A = Altruistic gift, C = Commit, H = Hold onto forgiveness (Worthington, 2020). According to Worthington, forgiving oneself can be accomplished in a different sequence of steps: Step 1: Receive God's Forgiveness, Step 2: Repair Relationships, Step 3: Rethink Rumination. Step 4: Emotional Self-Forgiveness using the REACH steps. Step 5: Rebuild Self-Acceptance. Step 6: Resolve to Live Virtuously.

Interestingly, Entwistle & Moroney (2005) also argue in analogy to positive psychology for a cautious shift of emphasis in theology to the positive character traits transformed by God's grace: "...evangelical theology has traditionally highlighted the problem of sin and its wide-ranging consequences for human beings. Not surprisingly, this state of affairs has led to integrative efforts that concentrate on the darker side of human nature and tend to neglect what is admirable and noble in human nature. A case is made [...] that a more complete view is needed that celebrates humans' positive features as creatures who bear the image of God, while simultaneously recognizing the pervasiveness of sin and its effects" (Entwistle & Moroney, 2005).

In my article on the operationalization and measurement of strength of faith, I have already pointed out the methodological challenges involved in the unreflected adoption of concepts from positive psychology in the psychology of religion (Haack, 2024). Fortunately, however, these problems have been addressed in recent years in transdisciplinary collaborations between representatives of theology, religious psychology and positive psychology. The results of joint reflections and empirical studies can be found, for example, in a special issue of the

ner Person, die dann erreicht wird, wenn eine Person in Balance mit positiven und negativen Aspekten des Lebens auskommen kann, ihre eigenen Stärken und Schwächen akzeptiert und ihre Verletzlichkeit annimmt. Dazu gehören schmerzhaft Gefühle, persönliche Lasten und die Zerbrechlichkeit der menschlichen Existenz. Mit der Mature Happiness Scale MHS von Wong und Bowers kann das reife Glück gemessen werden. Das Konstrukt unterscheidet sich von anderen Fragebögen zur Lebenszufriedenheit, die vor allem Selbstzentriertheit, Selbstoptimierung und Kontrolle erfassen. Eine überarbeitete Form der MHS wurde zusammen mit dem PERMA-Profil von Martin Seligman in einer kulturübergreifenden Studie eingesetzt. Sie erwies sich als reliables Messinstrument bei der Erfassung des Lebensglücks von Erwachsenen (Carreno et al. 2023). Schließlich ist noch auf die dritte Welle der Positiven Psychologie hinzuweisen, die den Gegenstandsbereich kontextuell, kulturell und ethisch ausweitete und neue qualitative und computationale Forschungsmethoden integrierte (Lomas et al., 2021).

Im Leben eines jeden Menschen lassen sich Veränderungen der Persönlichkeit und des Charakters beobachten. Neue Studien der lebenslaufbezogenen Persönlichkeitspsychologie zeigen, dass es zwar stabile Persönlichkeitsmerkmale gibt, dass aber auch Veränderungen bis ins hohe Alter möglich sind (Roberts & Yoon, 2024). Auch die geistliche Entwicklung von Christen unterliegt einer lebenslangen Dynamik. Sie war schon immer ein Thema von verantwortungsvoller reflektierter pastoraler Beratung, von Seelsorge und von Psychotherapie. Die schon erwähnte anglikanische Psychologin und Theologin Joanna Collicutt konnte bereits aus vielen einschlägige Studien der Psychologie nützliche didaktische Anwendungsprinzipien für ihr Programm zur christlichen Charakterveränderung ableiten (siehe Collicutt, 2015).

Wenn man die Liste von positiven Charakterzügen in der Positiven Psychologie (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) analysiert, dann fallen viele Ähnlichkeiten und Überschneidungen mit den Tugendkatalogen der Bibel auf, so wie sie etwa der Apostel Paulus in seinen 9 Tugendkatalogen



journal *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (Schnittker & Emmons, 2017), in an anthology published in honor of the Christian philosopher Dallas Willard (Crisp, Porter & Ten Elshof, 2019) and in an excellent interdisciplinary handbook (Davis, Worthington & Schnitker, 2023).

In conclusion, the primary source of character change in the lives of Christians is the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit. However, Christians can use empirical findings from positive psychology to develop more differentiated programs for spiritual formation. However, the goal of all spiritual exercises should not be the ego-centred self-optimization of a person, but a graduated triad of his life for the glory of God, for the good of his fellow human beings and society and for his own personal joy.

aufstellt, zum Beispiel etwa in Galater 4, 8 oder als Frucht des Geistes in Galater 5, 22-23: „Die Frucht aber des Geistes ist Liebe, Freude, Friede, Geduld, Freundlichkeit, Güte, Treue, Sanftmut, Keuschheit“. Es bleibt aber festzuhalten, dass die Positive Psychologie sich in ihrem Menschen- und Gottesbild von der Bibel unterscheidet. Tan weist darauf hin: „Positive Psychology does not sufficiently deal with sin, the fallenness of human beings, an evil with its tendency to overemphasise happiness, virtues, and strengths. There is a need, from biblical perspective, to focus more on godly sorrow and repentance (2. Cor. 7, 9-10), or “positive sadness”, including suffering and pain, and not only on positive emotion or happiness, and therefore to note the dark side of happiness” (Tan, 2019, Seite 43). Die Jünger Jesu sollten daher ihre eigenen Grenzen, ihre Schwächen und ihre Unvollkommenheit bei der Entwicklung herausfordernder Tugenden wie Demut und Bescheidenheit kennen.

Mark McMinn weist darauf hin, dass die Forschung zu Tugenden in der Positiven Psychologie durch einige herausragende Forscher mit christlichem Hintergrund vorangetrieben wurde wie etwa durch Everett Worthington (Vergebung, Demut) und Robert Emmons (Dankbarkeit, Gnade). Aus christlicher Perspektive könnte eine wichtige Schwerpunktverschiebung angestoßen werden, die über die Selbst-Zentrierung und den individuellen Nutzen eines tugendhaften Lebens zweifach hinausgeht. Christen ehren mit ihrem tugendhaften Leben Gott und wenden sich in seiner Liebe ihren Nächsten zu:

„Left on its own, positive psychology tends to settle back to a place of self-interest. I forgive because it’s good for me. I practice gratitude because it lowers my blood pressure. I pursue hope because it adds to my quality of life. Me, me, me. Many scientists fail to see the paradox of how a science of virtue can be twisted to be so very self-centered. And to this the church offers a nudge toward the love of God and neighbor ... When scientists lean toward the personal health effects of virtues, those in the church can nod and remind them of the larger context of virtues as well. Yes, we may live longer if we forgive our foes, but we will also forge

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stronger communities and encourage other who observe our forgiveness to forgive their foes as well” (McMinn, 2017, Seiten 163; 168).

Die Positive Psychologie könnte von einer theologischen Fundierung ihrer Tugendkataloge profitieren, wenn sie sich auf die biblischen Lehren von der Frucht des Heiligen Geistes einlässt. Christliche Seelsorger, Berater, Coaches und Psychotherapeuten dagegen könnten von differenzierten empirischen Prozessmodellen der Tugendentwicklung profitieren und daraus evidenzbasierte geistliche Trainingsprogramme entwickeln. Ein herausragendes Beispiel für derartige Transfereffekte ist die von Everett Worthington entwickelte Wissenschaft des Vergebens. Vergeben hat erstaunlich positive Effekte auf das individuelle gesundheitliche Wohlbefinden und die sozialen Beziehungen. Das REACH-Modell geht von fünf Phasen des Vergebens aus. Das Akronym REACH steht für die folgende Abfolge von Schritten: R = Recall the hurt, E = Empathize with your partner, A = Altruistic gift, C = Commit, H = Hold onto forgiveness (Worthington, 2020). Sich selbst zu vergeben kann nach Worthington in einer anderen Schrittfolge bewältigt werden: Schritt 1: Receive God's Forgiveness, Schritt 2: Repair Relationships, Schritt 3: Rethink Rumination. Schritt 4: Emotional Self-Forgiveness unter Anwendung der REACH-Schritte. Schritt 5: Rebuild Self-Acceptance. Step 6: Resolve to Live Virtuously.

Interessanterweise plädieren auch Entwistle & Moroney (2005) in Analogie zur Positiven Psychologie für eine vorsichtige Schwerpunktverschiebung in der Theologie auf die durch Gottes Gnade umgestalteten positiven Charakterzüge: „...evangelical theology has traditionally highlighted the problem of sin and its wide-ranging consequences for human beings. Not surprisingly, this state of affairs has led to integrative efforts that concentrate on the darker side of human nature and tend to neglect what is admirable and noble in human nature. A case is made [...] that a more complete view is needed that celebrates humans' positive features as creatures who bear the image of God, while simultaneously recognizing the pervasi-

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veness of sin and its effects” (Entwistle & Moroney, 2005).

In meinem Beitrag zu der Operationalisierung und der Messung von Glaubensstärke habe ich bereits auf die methodischen Herausforderungen bei der unreflektierten Übernahme von Konzepten der Positiven Psychologie in die Religionspsychologie hingewiesen (Haack, 2024). Erfreulicherweise sind diese Probleme in den letzten Jahren aber bei transdisziplinären Kooperationen zwischen Vertretern von Theologie, Religionspsychologie und Positiver Psychologie thematisiert worden. Der Ertrag der gemeinsamen Reflexionen und der empirischen Studien sind zum Beispiel in einem Themenheft der Zeitschrift *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (Schnittker & Emmons, 2017), in einem zu Ehren des christlichen Philosophen Dallas Willard herausgegebenen Sammelband (Crisp, Porter & Ten Elshof, 2019) und in einem exzellenten interdisziplinären Handbuch zu finden (Davis, Worthington & Schnitker, 2023) zu finden.

Abschließend ist festzuhalten, dass die primäre Quelle für Charakterveränderungen im Leben von Christen das souveräne Handeln des Heiligen Geistes ist. Christen können aber empirische Befunde der Positiven Psychologie nutzen, um differenziertere Programme zur geistlichen Formung zu entwickeln. Ziel aller geistlichen Übungen sollte jedoch nicht die ich-zentrierte Selbstoptimierung eines Menschen sein, sondern ein abgestufter Dreiklang seines Lebens zur Ehre Gottes, zum Wohl der Mitmenschen und der Gesellschaft und zu seiner ganz persönlichen Freude.



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Comment to

„How the Holy Spirit orchestrates spiritual formation - Insights from Theology and findings from Positive Psychology “

Two Disciplines or One? A Contra-Modern Response

Thanks are due to Johannes Haack for this splendid, well-written article. In it he provides a competent overview of distinctly Christian principles and practices of spiritual formation, drawing from both classical and contemporary sources; he offers a nuanced and balanced discussion of the mystery of the relation between divine and human activity in the spiritual change process; and in the last portion, a significant survey of positive psychology demonstrating sound Christian discernment that considers distinctly Christian contributions to positive psychology and interprets secular positive psychology from a Christian standpoint. Any number of the sections could have been turned into their own article (and I hope that will happen!). Readers will be in his debt.

Rather than elaborate on a specific topic within the article, I'd like to explore what might be called a meta-disciplinary assumption of

the article that arose in the past 200 years: that theology and psychology are unrelated, autonomous disciplines, having different objects and methods. This assumption, of course, is uncontroversial in our day. Most Christians in psychology share it, and it underlies the approach called the “integration of theology and psychology.” To its credit, however, integration is motivated by a spiritual sense that similar insights/findings from the two disciplines somehow belong together and that it's the Christian's task to bring them together – as was done quite aptly in the article.

I'm personally very grateful for integrative work, and I wish there were more of it. But the article got me to thinking that the activity of integration doesn't usually lead to something, like the formation of a new, integrated discipline. Perhaps I'm just missing it, but if that's true, integrative activity would seem to be an inherently temporary affair. After one writes or reads an integrative article or book, it seems as

if the conceptual and ethical force of the modern boundaries of theology and psychology inevitably pull the insights and findings back into their respective, rigidly bounded discipline, and everyone goes back to business as usual.

(We know the answer, but I have to ask anyway: could the inclusion of statistics and neuroscience within modern psychology's disciplinary boundary (i.e., self-understanding), but not theology and philosophy, have anything to do with WV assumptions?)

This outcome is so completely accepted, no one feels the need to comment on it, giving integrative activity a certain Sisyphus-like quality; yet such articles and books continue to be written. I think this is because the Spirit is the source of this energy. But it also helps explain why, after 50 years of such writing, there's still not a recognizable body of integrated literature. The integration project would seem to be an inherently unstable affair, continually undermining itself, perhaps burdened by an internal contradiction: the modern assumption that theology and psychology are unrelated, autonomous disciplines and the spiritual sense that they somehow belong together.

What if integration in its current form is a Christian child of modernity, and the impermanent state of its activity is due to its being beholden to two conflicting sets of WV assumptions? And what if, further, psychologists in the Christian community felt the conceptual and ethical force of worldview differences at least as strongly as that of disciplinary differences (and maybe more strongly). Perhaps, then, the Christian psychological community together could start revisioning and reimagining psychology and theology (and philosophy too) according to Christian worldview assumptions alone.

To better appreciate this possibility, a little history might be helpful.

In the High Middle Ages, things, of course, were very different. That was when the first universities were being founded, and theology was considered the queen of the sciences and

philosophy was her handmaiden. That's because the concerns of theology and philosophy were recognized to pertain to all the disciplines, for God was related to all that he created (especially human beings, made in his image) and the careful reflection of philosophy was universally valuable for all disciplinary inquiry. In addition, they shared the same sources of knowledge and literatures, and a lot of the same methods and practices. So, while these two disciplines were distinguished, we might call them metadisciplines, for their subject matter was foundational for and relevant to all other academic work (especially in what we now call the *Geisteswissenschaften*, [the human sciences]). Allowing theology and philosophy such preeminence in the curriculum helped to guarantee the unity of what was then the university.

Then came the Scientific Revolution, in which Christians were usually leaders, wanting to glorify God in the study of his creation. However, as more and more of God's creation was studied, the focus became smaller and smaller, and knowledge became fragmented, disciplinary boundaries ossified, and Western understanding compartmentalized. Gradually, the theological unity of the medieval university disappeared, perhaps replaced by a singular devotion to mathematics and the natural sciences. In the 1800's, the accomplishments, prestige, and influence of science and technology soared to previously unimaginable heights, while belief in God and the supernatural began to wane, and this led, at the turn of the last century, to the "secular revolution" (Smith, 2003). It was no coincidence that modern psychology was founded then, as the methods of the natural sciences began to be applied to the human sciences with great success. Since then, theology itself was secularized – turned into "religious studies" – as it seemed to compete with philosophy to become the most marginal discipline on campus.

Secular psychology, on the other hand, along with business, has come to dominate undergraduate schools, including Christian,

and their influence pervades social media and the public imagination. However, according to the materialistic WV that undergirds modern psychology, human beings are nothing more than comparatively highly evolved, complex organisms, that have to create their own meaning, beyond reproduction and species survival, in order to find some personal sense of significance. Christians should, of course, celebrate the surprising emergence and wonderful discoveries of modern positive psychology and learn what we can from them. But we also need to remind ourselves (and any others who might be interested) that a Christian WV has a much richer and more fulfilling view of human beings (made in God's image, loved by God, given meaning by God) and that Christian psychologists, like Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal, and Kierkegaard, had developed a remarkable understanding of virtue-formation that was intentionally rejected by the founders of modern psychology, and it took over 100 years to recover from its early objectivist bias against studying the virtues.

To put the point clearly, the biggest problem hindering the comparison and contrast of Christian theology and modern psychology is not the challenge of finding commonalities between their respective insights and findings – it's that they're based on fundamentally different and incompatible WVs. Making matters worse, WVs are taken-for-granted beliefs that underlie our interpretations of specific objects of study, and they're relatively little talked about in modern psychology or understood. So, what seems like a simple comparison between two similar concepts (e.g., Secular Gratitude [SG] and Christian Gratitude [CG]), if one assumes a common frame of reference, is actually quite problematic, because their differences far outweigh their similarities, if one factors in the fundamentally different frames-of-reference supplied by the WVs used to interpret them. For example, both forms of gratitude 1) acknowledge a good for which the recipient is thankful, and 2) benefit the grateful one.

However, SG does not recognize a transcendent source of the good; the good is, therefore, impersonal and ultimately meaningless; and SG is generated by humans, but not obligatory; whereas CG identifies the Source as a person; therefore, considers the good an interpersonal gift; and may express thanks to the Giver – and even the gratitude itself is a gift. So, their conceptual similarities are relatively superficial, compared with the deep and profound metaphysical differences they respectively suppose.

As a result, I wonder if the WV assumptions of secular psychology and the Christian theology that Haack and I share are so fundamentally different that the Christian community in psychology would be better off abandoning the modern assumption that theology and psychology are unrelated, autonomous disciplines, and retrieve (and slightly modify) the medieval assumptions that theology is the queen of the disciplines, including psychology – and Christian philosophy every discipline's handmaiden – both of them undergirding, fueling, and guiding psychology's theory-building, research, and practice. I wonder, further, if it would be helpful to see integrative activity as a necessary, developmental step in a larger, longer, communal process with a goal or telos unimaginable to modernity: the construction of one discipline (at least for the Christian community), a Christian psychology, enriched by the contributions of modern psychology, but based only on a Christian WV, and especially beholden to the distinctive psychological resources of the Christian tradition, including the Bible, Christian experience, spiritual formation, pastoral care, Christian theology, and Christian philosophy. And perhaps that's also the main goal of this e-journal?

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The Presence of the Holy Spirit in the counseling process with the client and counselor

One of the most significant ways that Christian counseling is different from other forms of counseling is that the counselor is aware of and sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit during the process of counseling. This article will review the role of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life and then discuss how the Holy Spirit's presence impacts the counselor and client.

The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity of God and has all the attributes God the Father possesses and Jesus the Son demonstrated while he was on the earth. The Holy Spirit has always existed and was present and participated in the Creation. The Old Testament records numerous times in which the Holy Spirit visited and blessed the people, but it is also clear that at times the Holy Spirit removed Himself from the people when they were disobedient (see Isa. 63:10). However, this changed under the New Covenant. During the last supper, Jesus tells his disciples that they will be given another counselor who will be with them forever the Spirit of Truth. Jesus goes on to say that the Holy Spirit will live in them and will not leave them ((John 14:16-18). Later in the conversation with His disciples, Jesus describes the work of the Holy Spirit which is "to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and

judgment" (John 16:8 NIV). It is important the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin so that we realize that we are sinners in need of a Savior, The Holy Spirit convicts us of righteousness when we realize that righteousness is only through Christ's death on the cross and judgment refers to the defeat of Satan (John 16:9). These verses identify the purpose of the work of the Holy Spirit and throughout the New Testament we see examples of how He works in individual lives. Jesus gives one example when he tells the disciples that the Holy Spirit will guide them into all truth (John 16:13). On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit began to permanently indwell His believers (Acts 2:1-11).

Grudem identifies 5 ways that the Holy Spirit provides evidence of God's presence and blessing, "(1) the Holy Spirit empowers: (2) the Holy Spirit purifies: (3) the Holy Spirit reveals: (4) the Holy Spirit unifies ... (5) the Holy Spirit gives stronger or weaker evidence of the presence and blessing of God, according to our response to him" (1994, p. 635). The Holy Spirit empowers us by giving us new life when we accept Jesus as our Lord. The Holy Spirit empowers us to serve God. This was demonstrated when the Holy Spirit empowered Stephen to preach the gospel (Acts 6:5, 8) and numerous

times when Paul was empowered to preach and to continue on despite persecution during his missionary journeys. The Holy Spirit also empowers each believer with spiritual gifts to build up the church.

The second work of the Holy Spirit is to purify which he does through the process of sanctification (Grudem p.639). The Holy Spirit helps new believers break from the patterns of sin in their lives and bring forth the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Holy Spirit reveals or gives evidence of God's presence by giving witness to our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). This gives us assurance and comfort. Believers are encouraged when they recognize the Holy Spirit working in their life and the lives of others. The Holy Spirit guides and directs Christians as we walk with Him and our desires change to conform with the Holy Spirit's desires and the fruit of the Spirit grows within us (Gal. 5:16-26). Because the Holy Spirit is God, He can impart truth (John 14:7), give wisdom (Deut. 34:9) and hope (Rom. 15:13). In addition, He teaches and helps us understand scripture (Grudem pp. 640-45).

The Holy Spirit brings unity. This was observed on the day of Pentecost when "the Holy Spirit created a new community which was the church" (Grudem, p. 646). Paul several times mentions the unifying work of the Holy Spirit when he writes to the Corinthians, Philippians and Ephesians about the fellowship of the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14, Phil. 2:1-2, and Eph. 2:18).

We also need to recognize that we must not grieve or offend the Holy Spirit by being disobedient. The Holy Spirit loves us and wants to bring blessings, but we see warnings in the New Testament against resisting the Holy Spirit. Paul warns the Ephesian, Corinthian and Thessalonian churches about grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30, 1 Cor. 6:19-20, 1 Thess. 5:19). The most serious offense is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Jesus warns the Pharisees of this when the Pharisees spoke against the Holy Spirit attributing His power to Satan. Jesus said this will not be forgiven and is an eternal sin (Mark 3:29). When we are disobe-

dient, we miss out on God's blessings and experience distance from God. However, when we are obedient, we are in fellowship with God and the Holy Spirit helps us be aware of his presence and blessing on our lives (Grudem pp. 647-49).

Holy Spirit's Presence Impacts the Counselor and Client

As Christian counselors, counseling is not just a profession but a calling and ministry in which it is important that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. If the counselor is going to allow the Holy Spirit to guide, they must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's presence. This begins with our own spirituality. Tan identifies seven aspects of Christian spirituality: First it means having a deep hunger or thirst for God (Ps. 42:1-2, Matt. 5:6). ... Second, it means having a love for God based on a personal knowledge of God (Matt. 22:37-38; John 14:21, 23; Rev. 2:1-7). ... Third it means being filled with the Holy Spirit and surrendering to God's deepening work of grace in our hearts and not yielding to the sinful nature or the flesh in us (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:6; Rom. 6:12-13). ... Fourth it means discovering and using the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit for God's purpose and glory (see Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4: 1 Pet. 4); bearing forth the fruit of the Spirit, which is ultimately agape or Christlike love (Gal. 5:22-23) and becoming more Christlike in every way in our lives and character (Rom. 8:29). Fifth it means developing biblical thinking and having a world view that is consistent with God's eternal perspective as revealed in the Bible, his inspired Word (cf. Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:16a; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). ... Sixth, it means being involved in spiritual warfare, which requires the use of supernatural power and resources from God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:20; Eph. 6:10-18) ... Finally, it means that there are mystical aspects and experiences in the depths of Christian spirituality, which transforms us to be more Christlike, including sharing in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10). (2022, pp. 443-44)

As Christian counselors we identify with Holy Spirit who is described by Jesus as the paraclete which can be translated as Counselor, Comforter, Helper or Advocate (John 14:26). The Holy

Spirit is our Counselor for our personal life and professional life. When we are sitting in a counseling room and are overwhelmed as a client tells us about a horrific trauma they have endured, the Holy Spirit comforts and guides us in how to help the person sitting in front of us. Feeling overwhelmed is a signal that we need to turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance.

For a client to make an informed decision regarding counseling, it is important that the client know that you are a Christian. But not everyone who comes to you is Christian or desires bringing faith into sessions. During the intake it is important to ask if the person is open to spiritual interventions, and if they are not, this is respected, and counseling is similar to secular counseling. Even when we are counseling someone who is not a Christian, we need to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance for the session which begins with pray before you meet the person for the session. Ethically we must address the issue that has brought the person to counseling. However, as we meet clients where they are, the clients may realize that we care about them and then be more open to talking about spiritual concerns. But even if we do not get to address spiritual issues during counseling, we can pray for the person and hopefully the person perceived the counseling was helpful, had a positive experience with a Christian and may later be open to hearing the gospel from someone else.

Many Christian clients are seeking a Christian counselor who will address not only psychological issues but also spiritual issues. With these clients the Christian counselor can be more open about the workings of the Holy Spirit in the life of the client and in the counseling process. Many come to counseling discouraged because they have been dealing with their issue for a while. One of the first things that a counselor must do is establish that there is hope in dealing with the problem and that hope is based on God. While counselors cannot promise a specific outcome, they can promise clients that the Holy Spirit is with them and will guide and comfort them. The Holy Spirit is even interceding for them as they may not know how to pray in a particular situation (Rom. 8:26). The

concept of dependent responsibility can be helpful as you are discussing the responsibility of the client in the counseling process. Dependent responsibility emphasizes that Christians have the responsibility to be obedient to God's Word, but we cannot do it on our own and must be dependent on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit (Bridges, 2007, p. 41). Knowing that the Holy Spirit is working in one's life and the person is not on his own brings hope. Secular counseling can be beneficial but Christian counseling can be transformative as the Holy Spirit empowers and transforms us.

Spiritual disciplines can be assigned as homework with the Christian client but must be done ethically. It is important the counselor work within the client's tradition. Respect the client and do not impose your religious values on the client. Encourage the client to connect to a religious community and be careful not to undermine the authority of the client's religious leaders (Richard & Bergin, 1997). Remember to treat the whole person, if the person came for counseling do not just use spiritual disciplines (Tan, 2004). The purpose of practicing spiritual disciplines needs to be explained. Spiritual disciplines draw us closer to God and as we draw closer to God, we experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22) and hope (Rom. 5:1-5). They help the client to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance. Finally, the client needs to desire to draw close to God and not just stop experiencing negative emotions. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in Christian counseling by guiding the counselor as he counsels, giving hope and enabling the client to change.

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<https://emcapp.ignis.de/14/#p=182>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/13/#p=72>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/12/#p=50>

Comment to

„The Presence of the Holy Spirit in the counseling process with the client and counselor“

This article approaches a significant topic in Christian counseling as indeed there are always three, the client, the counselor, and God's Holy Spirit, present in the counseling room. As the article points out, the Holy Spirit has multiple roles in the life of the believer and in the counseling process. One factor is that the Holy Spirit works just like Jesus did. Having been promised by Jesus as another counselor, the Holy Spirit is referred to as being exactly the same as Jesus was in character and function (Jn.14:16). Hence, in personal growth and in the counseling process, the Holy Spirit's work will always reflect that of Jesus in the Gospels.

Marriage and Family Therapist, a Certified Trauma Specialist Norman Wright discusses the importance of seeing Jesus' exemplary model and approach to counseling (2003, pp.18-27). For example, Jesus' compassion, acceptance, and worth-giving approach together

with His balanced practice of truth and grace are also reflected in the work and Person of the Holy Spirit, and should hence guide the Christian counseling process.

The writer of this article affirms how the holy life of Jesus is to be evident in the life of the counselor who, in turn, impacts the lives of the clients through their presence and being. Professors of Graduate Schools of Psychology at Rosemead and Biola, John Coe & Todd Hall, speak of the factor which the clients repeatedly state as most helpful in the therapeutic growth process: the therapeutic relationship (2010, p.341). The person of the counselor impacts the counseling process more than any technique or counseling modality. Professor of Psychology Mark McMinn describes the meaning of this for the Christian counselor, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, "Ideally a Christian counselor is also a healing agent – one whose spiritual

life spills over the interactions with everyone, including clients.” (1996, p.13)

As this article well reminds the reader, with the multitude of client’s presenting problems and complexity of their trauma, the Christian counselor can take heart. God understands the client’s situation and the counselor’s concerns. William Crane states the deep influence of the Holy Spirit as the ever-present Wonderful Counselor.

The Holy Spirit has access to all the materials that other psychotherapists know and use. In addition, He has direct access to the inner thoughts and feelings of the counselor. When the counselor becomes counselee in the presence of the Wonderful Counselor and sincerely seeks the honest reproof, correction and training in righteousness, which the Holy Spirit promises, then he may find it. Many have. (1970, p.28)

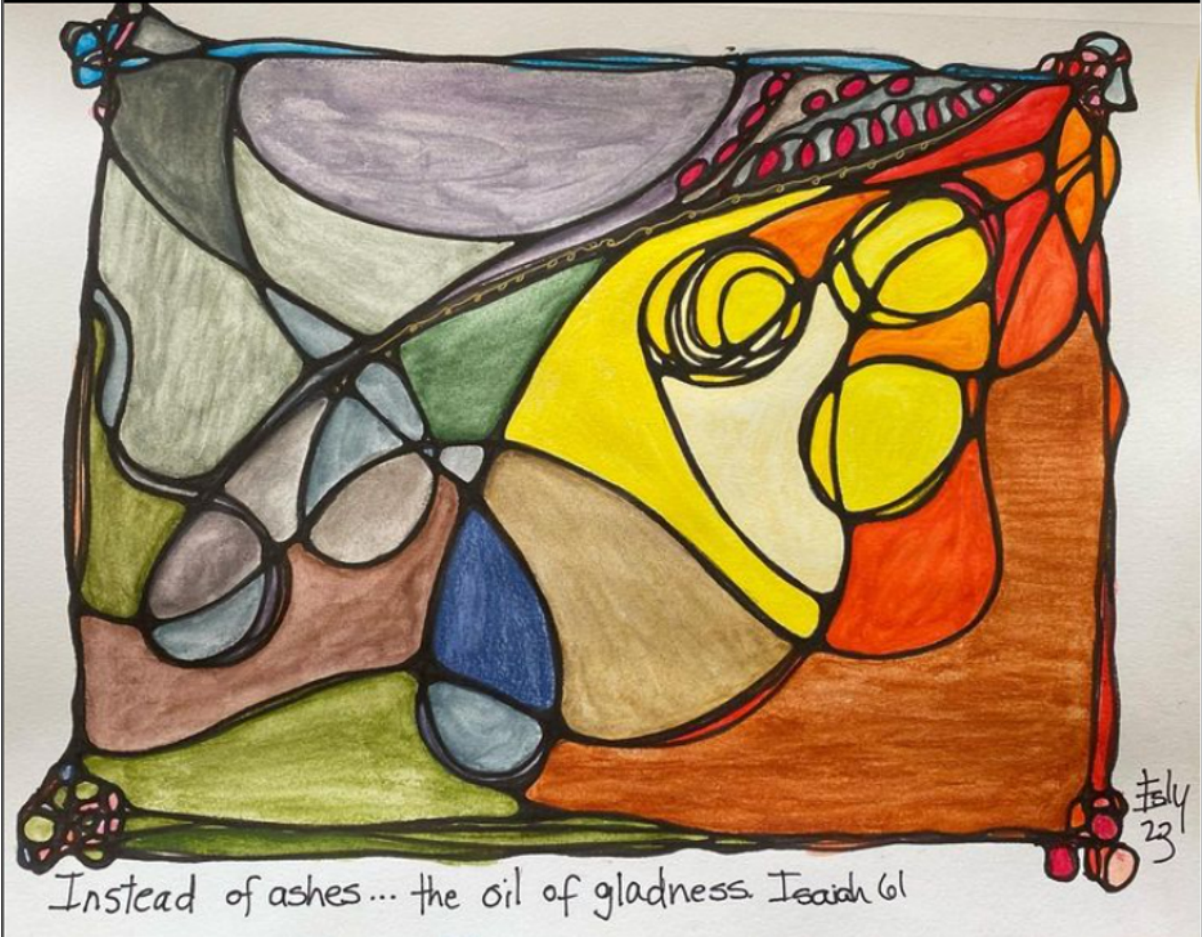
It would be interesting to further consider the work of the Holy Spirit in the counseling process, through the Christian counselor, in a transformational way. Ethics pose a challenge in the therapeutic process, as also discussed in this article. Christian ethics are systemic in nature (Sanders, 1997, p.30). Hence, systemic integration of context would consider the impact of creation, fall, redemption and sanctification as well as perhaps the view of human being,

especially the heart, as presented in the Scriptures; that of thinking, feelings and will. After all, “Psychology in the Spirit is actually a transformation of psychology through the central focus of the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit and a relational view of the person” (Coe & Hall, 2010, p.28) – all of which are affirmed by the author of this article.

As a Christian counselor, I was encouraged by the clear reminder of this article of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit in the counseling relationship. The author calls for the counselor to work in a process, led by the Spirit, in ways both relational and practical. In summary, the article reminds of a dependence on and growth by the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Christian counselor and their client, both in therapy and in relationships outside the office walls.

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**More about contemplative
and spirituality aspects**



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The Three-Fold Ministry of the Holy Spirit

This paper explores the three-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology, emphasizing its implications for Christian psychology. The Holy Spirit's roles in the Incarnation, the Church, and the deification of believers are examined, highlighting their anthropological significance. The discussion integrates theological insights from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, stressing the importance of maintaining theological integrity in clinical practice. The paper argues that the Holy Spirit's work in therapy promotes holistic healing by incorporating individuals into the Body of Christ, thus fostering spiritual and psychological well-being.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to make God the Son present in human history. In the New Testament, we see three ways by which this is carried out:

- The Incarnation of the Logos in the Virgin's womb (Lk. 1:35; Mt. 1:20)
- The Logos in His Body the Church (Acts 2:1-4)
- The deification of the believer (2 Pet.1:4)

The first thing that should be said is that Christology, ecclesiology, and soteriology all overflow any simplistic appeal to Scripture as well as the personal piety of the individual believer. To reduce the Christian faith in either way is offensive to the Gospel and to the intellectual integrity of the Christian tradition. The latter is especially egress if it is undertaken to articulate a so-called "Christian" psychology.

To speak bluntly—though not polemically—any appeal by the clinician to the Gospel that insulates clinical practice from the critical eye of the theologian is a form of malpractice. To do so is to claim "the form of godliness" while

denying “the power thereof” in the stark phrasing of the King James Version (see 2 Tim. 3:5). Moreover, the clinician must resist the temptation we see in some contemporary forms of piety to empty the work of the Holy Spirit of all theological content in favor of emotivism.

In what follows, I want to sketch out if only briefly the anthropological implications of the three-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit. Writing as I do from the theological tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church, some (or even all!) of what I have to say may seem new or even alien; it may even, God forbid, appear heretical. Against such reactions and criticism, I stand without defense beyond a gentle reminder that on that first Easter Sunday, the report by “Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women” of the resurrection of Christ seemed to the apostles “as idle tales, and they believed them not” (Lk. 24:10,11). Let us begin.

The Gods of Idolatry Were Destroyed

It is no denigration of the Cross to insist we join Good Friday to the rest of Jesus’ life—before and after. To attempt such a separation either explicitly or by neglect is to overlook the cosmological, soteriological, and even implications of the incarnation. This matters because it is the incarnation of the Word that justifies the project of Christian psychology and its evangelical mission. Orthodox hymnography for Christmas is helpful here.

When Augustus reigned alone on the earth, the many kingdoms of mankind came to an end; and when you became man from the pure Virgin, the many gods of idolatry were destroyed; the cities of the world passed under one single rule; and the nations came to believe in one single Godhead; the peoples were enrolled by decree of Caesar; we the faithful were enrolled in the name of the Godhead, when you became man, O our God. Great is your mercy, Lord; glory to you! (Vespers, Christmas Day).

The incarnation also offers Christian psychology a therapeutic agenda that is wholly positive and indeed even cheerful:

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, as we tell of the present mystery. The middle wall of partition has been destroyed; the sword of flame turns back, the Cherubim withdraw from the tree of life; and I partake of the delight of Paradise, from which I was cast out through disobedience. For the express Image of the Father, the Imprint of his eternity, takes the form of a slave, coming forth from a Mother who did not know wedlock, not undergoing change; for what he was he has remained: true God; and what he was not he has taken up, becoming man through love for mankind. To him let us cry out: God, born from a Virgin, have mercy on us.

The incarnation changes all humanity, indeed all creation, for the better. While not yet personally embraced by all, by taking on our humanity the Son unites each human being ontologically to the Father and so offers all the potential of new life. To be sure, the therapist ought not to lose sight of the concerns that bring the client to therapy. However, the Christian clinician has the unique privilege and obligation to see the client’s suffering in light of the “secret” of the incarnation.

Secretly you were born in a cave, but heaven proclaimed you to all, using the star as its mouth, O Saviour. It brought you Magi, who worshipped you in faith. Have mercy on them and on us.

As the incarnation was both seen and yet unseen, known and yet unknown, so too the work of the Holy Spirit is hidden in the depths of the human heart only slowly coming to light. And, even then, it is only seen “through a glass, darkly” and known only “in part” (1 Cor. 13:12). This means that a certain lack is inherent even in an active Christian faith.



The Holy Spirit Makes Up That Which is Lacking

There are three offices charged with the governance of the Church: deacon, priest, and bishop. For our purposes here it is noteworthy that at least in the Orthodox Church, the prayer of ordination for all three includes an acknowledgment of this deficiency: “divine grace, which always heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking.” In the prayer “grace” means not an abstract force but the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that overshadows the Virgin and is poured out on Pentecost is bestowed personally on the candidate for ordination. This is because the tongues of fire on Pentecost touch each individually.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:3-4).

In the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, all the sacraments—and for that matter, the whole of the Church’s public worship and private devotion—include the explicit invocation of the Holy Spirit taken from one of the vesperal hymns of Pentecost:

Heavenly King, Paraclete, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere, filling all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life; come and dwell in us, cleanse us from every stain, and O Good One save our souls.

At its best, the work of therapy participates in the healing grace of the Spirit which touches each of us personally, correcting and healing our unique deficiencies. The Spirit does this by incorporating us into the Body of Christ.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is

given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4: 4-7).

It is important to emphasize that the Holy Spirit heals when it incorporates us into the Body of Christ. It is here that we find not simply the human good of fellowship but communion with the Holy Trinity. It is more than a little tragic then that the public proclamation of this is greeted with scorn.

Fools did not recognise the voice spoken
In prophecy, called it drunkenness from wine,
When they heard the Apostles sayings in
strange tongues;
We the devout, inspired, cry out to you:
Renewer of the universe, blessed are you
(Matins, Pentecost).

When the hidden work of the Holy Spirit is made manifest, it is often rejected precisely because our wholeness of being requires that we surrender our preference as the standard of our lives; “not my will but your will be done” (see Lk. 22:42). Without prejudice to the issues that bring the client to therapy, it is the attachment to our own will that brings about the estrangement from God that is the cause of our suffering.

This leads us to our final, and most often misunderstood aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: Grace, Asceticism, and Memory

The Apostle Peter says Christians are “partakers of the divine nature.” Like iron in fire takes on characteristics of fire while remaining iron, the Christian takes on the characteristics of God while remaining human. St. Peter means this when he says that we have “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” In response to this gift we must cultivate in “all diligence” the virtues of faith, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, kindness, and charity. Peter then concludes with the promise that “if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (see 2 Pet. 1: 4-8).

We must resist the temptation to dismiss asceticism as a form of works righteousness or the imposition of a new law. Yes, it certainly can become a deforming practice; but the apostolic command of spiritual discipline (asceticism) reflects the anthropological reality that in our fallen condition, we are easily distracted. This is especially true when the object of our faith fills us with awe. Without effort, I easily forget what God has done for me.

And this brings us back to the Holy Spirit but now in the work of psychotherapy.

When Jesus promises us the “gift of the Holy Spirit,” He says that the Comforter ‘whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you’ (Jn. 14:26). The purification and re-orientation of

memory that is at the heart of the psychotherapeutic project, finds its natural fulfillment and perfection in the three-fold ministry of Holy Spirit. Like asceticism, the various forms of therapy can deform the believer, it nevertheless can be a work of the Holy Spirit.

Without prejudice to clinical goals, to the degree that it promotes wholeness of being, it also serves to help the believer integrate more fully into the life of the church. This happens by correcting, or maybe better, reorienting thoughts and actions that have come to take the place of Christ in the client’s life. Put in more theological terms, psychotherapy can be an ascetical discipline that helps the client become free to remember the good things God has done.



ts/ly
23/

She is like a tree planted by streams of water. Ps. 1:3



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Former articles by Werner available here:

- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/20/#p=71>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/19/#p=56>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/18/#p=53>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/17/#p=34>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/16/#p=37>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/12/#p=29>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/2/>

The Three Levels of Ministry with the Gifts of the Spirit

If I am honest with myself, ministry with the charisms, the gifts of the Holy Spirit (see for example 1 Corinthians 12-14) played a greater role in the first fifteen years of my life of faith than they do today. For me, there is no explicable reason why this is so, unless that I have become careless, that other things have become

Die drei Ebenen des Dienstes mit den Geistesgaben

Wenn ich mir selbst gegenüber ehrlich bin, hat für mich der Dienst mit den Charismen, den Gaben des Heiligen Geistes (siehe zum Beispiel 1. Korinther 12-14) in den ersten fünfzehn Jahren meines Glaubenslebens eine größere Rolle gespielt als heute. Es gibt keinen erklärbaren Grund für mich, warum das so ist, außer dass

more interesting to me and that I have perhaps succumbed to a certain stress that such ministries - especially when public - entail.

In recent years, I have enjoyed teaching about the Trinity of God, about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I make it clear that the Holy Spirit is also to be understood personally, the representative of Jesus in and with us.

This doctrinal unit also includes the teaching on the gifts of the Spirit, as developed above all by Paul, for example in his first letter to the Corinthians:

There are many different gifts, but it is one and the same Spirit who gives them to us... The work of the Spirit manifests itself in a different way in each of them, but it is always for the benefit of the whole church. One person is given by the one is given the ability to pass on insights into God's wisdom. Another recognises and says, with the help of the same Spirit, what to do in a particular situation. A third is given - also through the same Spirit - a special measure of faith, and yet another is given the gift of healing the sick through this one Spirit. One is enabled to perform miracles, another to make prophetic statements, yet another to judge whether something has been worked by the Spirit of God or not. One is enabled to speak in languages inspired by God, and another to render what is said in understandable words. All this is the work of one and the same Spirit, and it is his free decision which gift he bestows on each individual.

1 Corinthians 12:4, 7-11

Theologically, it remains open whether the phenomenon of charisms only refers to the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament or whether there are others.

God does not regret his gifts.

Thanks to this teaching activity, however, it has become important to me not to neglect these gifts even today, because God does not regret his gifts, they are necessary and I also want to do the first works again.

I can well remember a meeting for faith leaders in 1981. I had been a Christian for less than

ich nachlässig geworden bin, dass anderes für mich mehr an Interesse gewonnen hat und dass ich vielleicht einem gewissen Stress, den solche Dienste - vor allem wenn Öffentlich - mit sich bringen, ausgewichen bin.

In den letzten Jahren unterrichtete ich sehr gern über die Trinität Gottes, über den Vater, den Sohn und den Heiligen Geist. Ich verdeutliche dabei, dass der Heilige Geist auch personal zu verstehen ist, der Stellvertreter von Jesus in und bei uns.

Zu dieser Lehreinheit gehört auch die Lehre über die Geistesgaben, wie sie vor allem Paulus entfaltet, zum Beispiel im ersten Brief an die Korinther:

Es gibt viele verschiedene Gaben, aber es ist ein und derselbe Geist, der sie uns zuteilt. ... Bei jedem zeigt sich das Wirken des Geistes auf eine andere Weise, aber immer geht es um den Nutzen der ganzen Gemeinde. Dem einen wird durch den Geist die Fähigkeit geschenkt, Einsichten in Gottes Weisheit weiterzugeben. Der andere erkennt und sagt mit Hilfe desselben Geistes, was in einer bestimmten Situation zu tun ist. Einem dritten wird – ebenfalls durch denselben Geist – ein besonderes Maß an Glauben gegeben, und wieder ein anderer bekommt durch diesen einen Geist die Gabe, Kranke zu heilen. Einer wird dazu befähigt, Wunder zu tun, ein anderer, prophetische Aussagen zu machen, wieder ein anderer, zu beurteilen, ob etwas vom Geist Gottes gewirkt ist oder nicht. Einer wird befähigt, in Sprachen zu reden, die von Gott eingegeben sind, und ein anderer, das Gesagte in verständlichen Worten wiederzugeben. Das alles ist das Werk ein und desselben Geistes, und es ist seine freie Entscheidung, welche Gabe er jedem Einzelnen zuteilt.

1. Korinther 12,4.7-11

Theologisch bleibt offen, ob das Phänomen Charismen nur auf die im Neuen Testament erwähnten Gaben des Heiligen Geistes bezogen ist oder ob es weitere gibt.

Gott gereuen seine Gaben nicht.

three years at the time and was only allowed to take part in the workshops because I was part of the organising team. There was a speaker at this meeting who was recognised as being in the healing ministry. It was therefore clear that most people would go to his workshop, because this workshop was something special. But in prayer it became clear to me that I should go to the workshop on prophecy instead, which I did. There was a team of about six people waiting for us, but we were the only two participants. So they had enough time to pray with us and introduce us to this ministry.

It was another year before I plucked up the courage to ask God for a prophetic impulse at a prayer meeting: I suddenly had the thought that there was a man there who was worried because his son was ill. I also had the impulse that God wanted to tell him that he could relax because God would take care of the boy.

However, I didn't have the courage to say this publicly, but told the event organiser in private. However, he immediately grabbed the microphone and announced what I had received. At that moment, a man entered the hall who had just been on the phone to his family in the foyer and had learnt of his son's illness.

How great is the love of God! This man entered the room worried and heard that God was taking care of him!

That was my first experience of listening to impulses from God.

Over the next few years, this was to play a greater role in my ministry. I didn't always hear correctly, fruit didn't always appear, but it often did. As I said, this all happened in the eighties and early nineties, when I was still at the beginning of my life of faith. And I was also allowed to learn to responsibly examine everything I 'heard or saw'.

At the end of 2010, I decided to pray for specific things that God wanted to do, as I had done in the past, and to share my impressions at seminars on the subject of the Holy Spirit. A knee was to be healed, something lost was to be found again, something not yet forgiven was to be cleared up. Out of honesty, I asked whom these impressions had applied to and what the

Dank dieser Lehrtätigkeit ist mir aber wichtig geworden, diese Gaben auch heute nicht zu vernachlässigen, denn Gott gereuen seine Gaben nicht, sie sind nötig und ich möchte auch die ersten Werke wieder tun.

Ich kann mich gut an ein Treffen für geistliche Leiter 1981 erinnern. Ich war damals noch keine drei Jahre Christ und durfte nur an den Workshops teilnehmen, weil ich im Organisationsteam mitarbeitete. Bei diesem Treffen war ein Redner anwesend, der in anerkannter Weise im Heilungsdienst stand. Daher war klar, dass die meisten zu seinem Workshop gehen würden, denn dieser Workshop war etwas Besonderes. Aber im Gebet wurde mir deutlich, dass ich stattdessen den Workshop über Prophetie aufsuchen sollte, was ich dann auch tat. Dort wartete ein Mitarbeiterteam von etwa sechs Personen auf uns, aber wir waren nur zwei Teilnehmer. So hatten sie ausreichend Zeit, um mit uns zu beten und uns in diesen Dienst einzuführen.

Es dauerte noch einmal ein Jahr, bis ich den Mut fasste, bei einem Gebetstreffen Gott um einen prophetischen Impuls zu bitten: Ich hatte plötzlich den Gedanken, dass ein Mann da sei, der sich Sorgen machte, weil sein Sohn erkrankt war. Außerdem hatte ich den Impuls, dass Gott ihm sagen wollte, dass er sich entspannen könne, weil Gott sich um den Jungen kümmern würde.

Ich fand aber nicht den Mut, dies öffentlich zu sagen, sondern teilte es dem Veranstaltungsleiter unter vier Augen mit. Dieser griff jedoch sofort zum Mikrofon und gab bekannt, was ich empfangen hatte. In diesem Augenblick betrat ein Mann den Saal, der gerade im Foyer mit seiner Familie telefoniert und von der Erkrankung seines Sohnes erfahren hatte.

Wie groß ist die Liebe Gottes! Dieser Mann betrat besorgt den Saal und hörte, dass Gott sich um ihn kümmert!

Das war meine erste Erfahrung mit dem Hören auf Impulse von Gott. In den nächsten Jahren sollte dies eine größere Rolle in meinem Dienst einnehmen. Nicht immer hörte ich richtig, nicht immer zeigte sich Frucht, aber doch oft.

Wie gesagt, das ereignete sich alles in den Achtzigern und Anfang der neunziger Jahre, als

individual had experienced, even if there was no reason for this to be felt immediately. And I was amazed, as I used to be, that people who had been approached got in touch or that I received mail the next day to say that the lost object had been found and the knee pains had stopped.

It is still true today: God is our loving Father who appreciates talking to us. Jesus says: 'My sheep hear my voice' (John 10:27). Not everyone who hears God has to be or become a prophet. But our openness to being familiar with the Holy Spirit creates differences at the level of basic ability to hear God.

Three levels of ministry with the gifts of the Spirit

It has helped me to distinguish between three levels when serving with the Holy Spirit: the universal role, the charism and the ministry, as I heard John Wimber (USA, 1934 - 1997), the founder of the Vineyard Movement, say years ago at a conference.

John Wimber calls the fundamental ability to live with spiritual gifts, i.e. including hearing God, a universal role of Christians. This means that it is possible for every Christian to hear God, for example. The difference between everyday listening to God and the charism, the spiritual gift, is that with the charism I receive a gift from God for another person, which I pass on. The activity lies more with God than with me. I experience myself more as a 'postman' than as someone who actively does something. I experience this time and again.

If such commissionings from God occur quite frequently or regularly in a person, a prophetic ministry (office) is emerging, which should be confirmed by the church after some time.

Some people find it difficult to engage with the gifts of the Holy Spirit at all. One reason for this is not God, but our image of God, for example when we think: 'God doesn't speak, and if he does, then not to me.' Worry and the mistrust of being misled can also prevent us from opening ourselves up to the gifts of the Spirit. But before we can check whether we are hearing correctly, we first have to hear at all. That is why it is important to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit and the gifts he wants to give us.

ich in meinem Glaubensleben noch am Anfang stand. Und ich durfte auch lernen verantwortungsvoll alles „Gehörte oder Gesehene“ zu prüfen.

Ich entschied mich Ende 2010, wie früher um konkrete Dinge zu beten, die Gott gerade tun wollte, und meine Eindrücke dann auch bei Seminaren zum Thema Heiliger Geist mitzuteilen. Ein Knie sollte heil werden, etwas Verlorenes sollte wiedergefunden werden, etwas noch nicht Vergebenes bereinigt werden. Aus Redlichkeit fragte ich nach, auf wen diese Eindrücke zugetroffen hatten und was der Einzelne erlebte, auch wenn das nicht unmittelbar sofort zu spüren sein musste. Und ich staunte wie früher, dass sich Angesprochene meldeten oder dass ich am nächsten Tag Post erhielt, dass das Verlorene gefunden worden und die Knie-schmerzen verschwunden waren.

Es gilt nach wie vor: Gott ist unser liebender Vater, der es schätzt, mit uns zu sprechen. Jesus sagt: „Meine Schafe hören meine Stimme“ (Johannes 10,27). Es muss nicht jeder, der Gott hört, gleich ein Prophet sein oder werden. Doch unsere Offenheit dafür, mit dem Heiligen Geist vertraut zu sein, schafft Unterschiede auf der Ebene der grundsätzlichen Befähigung, Gott zu hören.

Drei Ebenen des Dienstes mit den Geistesgaben

Es hat mir geholfen, beim Dienen mit dem Heiligen Geist drei Ebenen zu unterscheiden: die Universalrolle, das Charisma und das Amt, wie ich es vor Jahren bei einer Tagung von John Wimber (USA, 1934 – 1997), dem Gründer Vineyard-Bewegung, gehört hatte.

Die grundsätzliche Befähigung, mit Geistesgaben zu leben, also auch Gott zu hören, nennt John Wimber eine Universalrolle der Christen. Das heißt, es ist jedem Christen möglich, z. B. Gott zu hören. Der Unterschied zwischen dem alltäglichen Hören auf Gott und dem Charisma, der Geistesgabe, besteht dann darin, dass ich beim Charisma ein Geschenk von Gott für eine andere Person empfangen, das ich weitergebe. Die Aktivität liegt dabei mehr bei Gott als bei mir.

Personally, I ask myself what makes it difficult for me to hear God's voice after decades of listening to him. The answer is that hearing God requires me to take a back seat.

If I am honest, in all these decades I have not wanted to give up my own competent actions or take time to pause to give space to the Holy Spirit. I have also been able to detect comfort, which perhaps had a portion of fear of man behind it, deterring me from exposing myself to the stress of something that is extraordinary, that is, conspicuous.

Perhaps, in my first years of faith, I also used all these experiences with the Holy Spirit as 'food' for my Christian identity - I am one who can hear God, on the way to becoming a prophet! - but it certainly wasn't that alone.

So today, after more than four decades, I will be able to live out all these treasures differently, no longer so strongly identity-forming, hopefully much more characterised by love and humility and guided by an attitude that seeks to do what I see the Father doing, as Jesus said.

When I say or do something today that has its starting point in God's speaking, I do not say: 'The Lord has spoken', or 'God showed me', but I simply pass on the thought, for example: 'It has become clear to me that ...', or 'I would like to pass this on to you ...'

God should testify, not the words of my packaging.

And almost every day, when I ask God to speak to me, I am amazed at the new and enriching thoughts, perspectives and ideas that arise. But I also love to reflect, seek advice and practise looking for creative solutions. If the two paths lead to different solutions, my listening to God and my human pondering and questioning, it is because both are limited and I start all over again until I find a consensus.

The wish is for God to bless me, whether I listen to him with the help of the Holy Spirit, or whether, with his help, I reflect. Today, this is no longer a contradiction for me. I trust that God is with us, even if we are not looking for direct leading of the Spirit.

A personal experience:

Years ago, I had the task of coordinating class conferences at a workplace.

Ich erlebe mich mehr als „Briefträger“, als dass ich etwas aktiv tue. So erlebe ich immer wieder mal.

Treten solche Beauftragungen Gottes bei einer Person häufiger, bzw. regelmäßig auf, zeichnet sich ein prophetischer Dienst (Amt) ab, der nach einiger Zeit Bestätigung durch die Gemeinde erfahren sollte.

Manche Menschen haben Schwierigkeiten, sich überhaupt auf die Gaben des Heiligen Geistes einzulassen. Ein Grund dafür ist nicht Gott, sondern unser Gottesbild, wenn wir zum Beispiel denken: „Gott redet nicht, und wenn doch, dann nicht zu mir.“ Auch Sorge und das Misstrauen, irreführt zu werden, können uns davon abhalten, uns für die Geistesgaben zu öffnen. Aber bevor wir prüfen können, ob wir richtig hören, müssen wir erst einmal überhaupt hören. Darum ist es wichtig, offen zu sein für das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes und die Gaben, die er uns schenken möchte.

Ganz persönlich stellt sich mir die Frage, was es mir nach Jahrzehnten des Hörens von Gottes Stimme schwer macht, ihn zu hören. Die Antwort ist: Gott zu hören setzt voraus, dass ich mich selbst zurücknehme.

Wenn ich ehrlich bin, wollte ich in all den Jahrzehnten nicht auf mein eigenes kompetentes Handeln verzichten oder mir Zeit nehmen, inzuhalten, um dem Heiligen Geist Raum zu geben. Auch Bequemlichkeit konnte ich feststellen, hinter der vielleicht eine Portion Menschenfurcht steckte, mich dem Stress von etwas auszusetzen, was außergewöhnlich, das heißt auffällig ist.

Vielleicht habe ich in meinen ersten Glaubensjahren all diese Erfahrungen mit dem Heiligen Geist auch als „Nahrung“ für meine christliche Identität gebraucht – ich bin einer, der Gott hören kann, auf dem Weg ein Prophet zu werden! – aber das war es sicher nicht allein.

So werde ich heute, nach über vier Jahrzehnten, all diese Schätze anders ausleben können, nicht mehr so stark identitätsstiftend, hoffentlich viel mehr von Liebe und Demut geprägt und von einer Haltung gesteuert, die versucht, das zu tun, was ich den Vater tun sehe, wie Jesus es gesagt hat.



It was in a large educational institution with workshops, boarding school, school, support services such as psychologists and social workers. The task was to bring all these different professions together for a number of school classes. This was no easy task, as the employees had different working hours, different statuses, some of the employees had to come off duty, others came during working hours. Over time, the following procedure crystallised: I made a draft of the 20 or so meetings based on the different timetables. This draft went through the departments, then came back with improvements and I took the suggestions into account in a new version. This second draft went through the same procedure. The third version was then usually the final plan. Around 75% of the meetings took place, and again not all of the invited employees were always present. But everyone got used to this and it was not a bad average result.

When I once again sat down to plan a session, I felt as if God were saying he wanted to help me. It wasn't easy for me to allow this, as I was used to creating a plan with a lot of routine that everyone was happy with. When I finally said 'yes', I let the Holy Spirit guide me. Based on the information I had, I drew up the meeting plan in one go. I immediately put it into circulation as the final plan and - no session was cancelled and all sessions were fully attended!

Why am I telling this story? I never managed to listen to God on this matter again. I could no longer bring myself to renounce my own active competence, to step back and make room for the Holy Spirit.

Appendix. Hearing God: surely there is another explanation for this?

Alternative attempts to explain God's speaking to us, demonstrated and tested in a real example.

On Sunday evenings we, a group of about 8-10 people, used to pray together and personally bless each individual participant for the new week. When I was prayed for once, I received the following prophetic word: 'Next week you

Wenn ich heute irgendetwas sage oder tue, was seinen Ausgangspunkt im Reden Gottes hat, sage ich nicht: „Der Herr hat gesprochen“, oder „Gott zeigte mir“, sondern ich gebe einfach den Gedanken weiter, z.B.: „Mir ist deutlich geworden, dass ...“, oder „Das würde ich dir gern mit auf den Weg geben ...“

Gott soll sich bezeugen, nicht die Worte meiner Verpackung.

Und fast tagtäglich staune ich heute, wenn ich Gott bitte, zu mir zu sprechen, welche neuen und bereichernden Gedanken, Perspektiven oder Ideen sich auftun. Aber ich liebe auch das Nachdenken, hole mir gern Rat und übe mich darin, nach kreativen Lösungen zu suchen. Kommen beide Wege zu unterschiedlichen Lösungen, mein Hören auf Gott und mein menschliches Nachsinnen und Fragen, liegt es daran, dass beides begrenzt ist, und ich fange nochmals von vorne an, bis ich eine Übereinstimmung finde.

Gott soll mich segnen, ob ich auf ihn mit Hilfe des Heiligen Geistes höre oder mit seiner Hilfe nachsinne. Das macht für mich heute keinen Widerspruch mehr aus. Ich vertraue, dass Gott mit uns ist, auch wenn wir nicht eine direkte Geistleitung suchen.

Ein persönliches Erlebnis:

Vor Jahren hatte ich an einer Arbeitsstelle die Aufgabe, Klassenkonferenzen zu koordinieren. Es war in einer großen Bildungseinrichtung mit Werkstätten, Internat, Schule, begleitenden Diensten wie Psychologen und Sozialarbeitern. Es galt, alle diese verschiedenen Berufssparten für viele Schulklassen an einen Tisch zu bekommen. Das war keine leichte Aufgabe, denn die Mitarbeiter hatten verschiedene Arbeitszeiten, verschiedenen Status, manche der Mitarbeiter mussten außerdienstlich kommen, andere während der Arbeitszeit. Es hatte sich mit der Zeit folgender Ablauf herauskristallisiert: Ich machte aufgrund der verschiedenen Stundenpläne einen Entwurf dieser etwa 20 Sitzungen. Dieser Entwurf ging durch die Abteilungen, kam dann mit Verbesserungen zurück und ich berücksichtigte in einer Neufassung die Vorschläge. Dieser zweite Entwurf durchlief die gleiche Prozedur. Die dritte Fassung war dann meistens der endgültige Plan. Etwa 75 % der

will meet a man with black hair and a moustache. He will tell you something important.'

You can imagine how excited I was about this week because I had a very specific question on my mind. However, I didn't know anyone around me who matched this description. Nothing special happened until the following Saturday. So my wife and I agreed that the man meant the electrician who had carried out extensive repairs in our house that week and who roughly matched the description. We believed that God simply wanted to give us peace and trust in this man, his work and the associated bill. So we put the prophetic statement to one side.

Then on Sunday afternoon at a church meeting, a young man approached me about the very question that was bothering me so much. It was someone I met maybe once or twice a year and had no other relationship with. After the conversation, I physically felt the presence of God and suddenly understood what I had just been told: it was an important thought about my question! And the young man in question had black hair and sported a moustache!

How does one try to explain this if one rejects the idea that there is a God who speaks to and with us?

Model 1:

The self-fulfilling prophecy

Classical school psychology must regard this phenomenon as intrapsychic; in its world view, only the ego of the individual, other people and the environment exist. One explanatory model for predictions that come true, as in our example, is - in addition to chance - the theory of the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. This refers to the phenomenon that one's judgement or expectations regarding a situation already influence it. That is, on the basis of previous information I would more or less intentionally bring about the situation by my behaviour. Some examples: Perhaps someone reads this in his horoscope: "You are going to have a traffic accident". The result: His fearfulness and exaggerated caution disturb his driving habits and this leads to an accident. Or he is given information: "You will have an important meeting with a blond man". This influences my attention and perception so much

Sitzungen fanden statt, bei denen wiederum nicht immer alle eingeladenen Mitarbeiter anwesend waren. Aber daran hatte sich jeder gewöhnt und es war gar kein schlechtes Durchschnittsergebnis.

Als ich mich einmal wieder an die Planung einer Sitzungsperiode machte, war es mir, als ob Gott sagen würde, er wolle mir helfen. Es fiel mir nicht leicht, das zuzulassen, denn ich war es ja gewohnt mit viel Routine einen Plan zu erstellen, mit dem alle zufrieden waren. Als ich dann doch „ja“ sagte, ließ ich mich vom Heiligen Geist führen. Aufgrund der vorhandenen Informationen erstellte ich den Sitzungsplan in einem Zug. Ich setzte ihn gleich als endgültigen Plan in Umlauf und – keine Sitzung fiel aus und alle Sitzungen waren vollständig besucht!

Warum ich diese Geschichte erzähle? Es ist mir nie wieder gelungen, in dieser Sache auf Gott zu hören. Ich brachte es nicht mehr fertig, auf mein eigenes kompetentes Handeln zu verzichten, mich zurückzunehmen und dem Heiligen Geist Raum zu geben.

Anhang: Gott hören, kann man das nicht auch anders erklären?

Alternative Erklärungsversuche zum Reden Gottes, an einem Beispiel demonstriert und geprüft

Sonntagabends pflegten wir, eine Gruppe von etwa 8-10 Personen, im Rahmen eines gemeinsamen Gebets jeden einzelnen Teilnehmer für die neue Woche persönlich zu segnen. Als dabei einmal für mich gebetet wurde, erhielt ich folgendes prophetisches Wort zugesprochen: „Du wirst in der nächsten Woche einem Mann begegnen, der schwarze Haare hat und einen Schnurrbart. Er wird dir etwas Wichtiges sagen.“

Man kann sich vorstellen, wie gespannt ich auf diese Woche war, weil mich eine ganz spezielle Frage beschäftigte. Allerdings kannte ich niemanden aus meinem Umfeld, auf den diese Beschreibung zutreffen hätte. Bis zum nächsten Samstag ereignete sich nichts Besonderes. So

that I observe the promised event. I concentrate on blonde men more than usual, people I would usually not particularly notice when I encounter them in the absence of this information.

Or the final possibility: Ambiguous situations are interpreted in the sense of the expected promise. If, for example, I fully adopt the false belief that "no one loves me", I will experience feelings of rejection when my neighbour passes me by without a greeting.

Model 2: Intuition

A psychological dictionary defines the term intuition as '... a mental insight, a kind of intuition, not gained through experience or reasoning, but through direct comprehension of the essence of a reality, similar to revelation.' C.G. Jung considers the intuition function, i.e. the ability to immediately grasp the essence of something, to be an irrational, basic psychological function that is particularly important in certain people, the intuition types. In esoteric thinking, this ability extends to clairvoyance or precognition (foreknowledge of future events), among other things. In contrast to Jung, it is claimed here that every human being is capable of this and must unlock it through mind-expanding techniques.

Model 3: Christian Psychology

Christian Psychology is based on a personalistic theory of information: Information necessarily presupposes not only a receiver, but also a sender. Information without a sender is inconceivable. I can therefore not simply perceive 'something'. There must also be 'someone' who sends this 'something'.

The personal God of the Bible is omniscient. He is the transmitter of divine information. The Holy Spirit, who is given to us through rebirth (cf. John 16:13-15), is the mediator of this information.

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you."

einigten meine Frau und ich uns darauf, dass mit dem Mann der Elektriker gemeint war, der in dieser Woche umfangreiche Reparaturen in unserem Haus durchgeführt hatte und auf den die Beschreibung in etwa passte. Wir glaubten, Gott wolle uns einfach Frieden und Vertrauen zu diesem Mann, seiner Arbeit und der damit verbundenen Rechnung geben. Damit legten wir die prophetische Aussage als erledigt beiseite.

Am Sonntagnachmittag sprach mich dann bei einer Gemeindeversammlung ein junger Mann genau auf die Frage an, die mich so stark beschäftigte. Es war jemand, den ich im Jahr vielleicht ein- oder zweimal traf und zu dem keine weitere Beziehung bestand. Nach dem Gespräch spürte ich die Gegenwart Gottes körperlich und verstand plötzlich, was mir gerade gesagt worden war: Es war ein wichtiger Gedanke zu meiner Frage! Und der betreffende junge Mann hatte schwarze Haare und trug einen Schnurrbart!

Wie versucht man, dies zu erklären, wenn man ablehnt, dass es einen zu und sprechenden Gott gibt?

Modell 1:

Die sich selbst erfüllende Prophezeiung

Die klassische Schulpsychologie muss dieses Phänomen als intrapsychisch betrachten; denn in ihrem Weltbild existieren nur das Ich des Einzelnen, die anderen Menschen und die Umwelt. Ein Erklärungsmodell für ein-treffende Voraussagen, wie bei unserem Beispiel, ist – neben dem Zufall – die Theorie der „Self-fulfilling Prophecy“, der sich selbst erfüllenden Prophezeiung. Gemeint ist das Phänomen, dass die Einschätzung bzw. Erwartung bezüglich einer Situation diese bereits beeinflusst. D.h., ich werde aufgrund meiner Vorinformationen durch mein Verhalten das Ereignis mehr oder weniger absichtlich herbeiführen.

Einige Beispiele: Jemand liest in seinem Horoskop „Sie werden einen Verkehrsunfall haben.“ Die Folge: Seine Ängstlichkeit und Übervorsicht stören seine Fahrrou tine und es kommt zu einem Unfall.



Which explanatory model fits?

Which explanatory model we accept depends neither on purely scientific nor experiential factors. My example could be explained as self-fulfilling prophecy, although it does seem improbable that one would meet precisely the right person who addresses the central problem and exactly at a point in time when one no longer expected it.

The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy also fails as an explanation where predictions are made of which the people concerned know nothing. I remember that this was the case when we prayed for a girl because of her relationship with an unbelieving boyfriend. We were given a prophetic word that the latter would soon find his way to Jesus. This happened the next day, without any member of the prayer group having any opportunity to influence this. Here, too, we could explain away God's working, but I will refrain from doing so now for reasons of space.

Human experience, including the experience of hearing from God, is always interpreted experience. My picture of the world and of the human being play a role, and these are in turn dependent on my decisions in faith. Do I believe that there is a God, or do I believe that there is no God? I can look for proofs and refutations of these statements, yet in this I will always take my assumptions as a starting point and see my experiences accordingly.

Oder durch den Hinweis „Sie werden eine wichtige Begegnung mit einem blonden Mann haben“ werden meine Aufmerksamkeit und Wahrnehmung so gelenkt, dass ich das verheißene Ereignis wahrnehme. Ich konzentriere mich mehr als sonst auf blonde Männer, die mir normalerweise, ohne diese Vorinformation, gar nicht so auffallen, wenn ich ihnen begegne.

Oder letzte Möglichkeit: Mehrdeutige Situationen werden im Sinne der verheißenen Erwartung interpretiert. Wenn ich zum Beispiel dem Irrglauben aufsitze „niemand liebt mich“, werde ich mich als abgelehnt erleben, wenn mein Nachbar grußlos an mir vorbeigeht.

Modell 2: Intuition

Ein psychologisches Wörterbuch definiert den Begriff Intuition als „... eine geistige Schau, eingebungsartig, nicht durch Erfahrung oder Überlegungen, sondern durch unmittelbares Erfassen des Wesens einer Wirklichkeit gewonnene, der Offenbarung ähnliche Einsicht.“

C.G.Jung betrachtet die Intuitionsfunktion, also die Fähigkeit, das Wesen von etwas unmittelbar zu erfassen, als eine irrationale, psychische Grundfunktion, die vor allem bei bestimmten Menschen, den Intuitionstypen, vorrangig ist. Im esoterischen Denken erweitert sich diese Fähigkeit unter anderem zum Hellsehen oder zur Präkognition (Vorauswissen zukünftiger Vorgänge). Im Gegensatz zu Jung wird behauptet, dass jeder Mensch dazu fähig sei und dies durch bewusstseinsweiternde Techniken freilegen müsse.

Modell 3: Christliche Psychologie

Die Christliche Psychologie geht von einer personalistischen Informationstheorie aus: Information setzt notwendigerweise nicht nur einen Empfänger, sondern auch einen Sender voraus. Information ohne Sender ist nicht vorstellbar. Ich kann also nicht nur „etwas“ wahrnehmen. Es muss auch „jemand“ existieren, der dieses „etwas“ sendet.

Der personale Gott der Bibel ist allwissend. Er ist der Sender göttlicher Information. Der Heilige Geist, der uns durch die Wiedergeburt geschenkt ist (vgl. Joh 3,3-5), ist der Mittler dieser Information.

„Wenn aber jener, der Geist der Wahrheit, kommen wird, wird er euch in alle Wahrheit leiten. Denn er wird nicht aus sich selber reden; und was zukünftig ist, wird er euch verkündigen.“
(Joh. 16,13-15)

Welches Erklärungsmodell trifft zu?

Welche Erklärungsmodelle wir akzeptieren, lässt sich nicht rein wissenschaftlich oder durch die Erfahrung allein klären. Mein Beispiel ließe sich durch selbst erfüllende Prophezeiung erklären, wenngleich es doch eher unwahrscheinlich erscheint, genau den richtigen Mann zu treffen, der das zentrale Problem anspricht und zwar zu einem Zeitpunkt, an dem man es nicht mehr erwartet.

Das Konzept der selbsterfüllenden Prophezeiung versagt auch dort als Erklärung, wo Voraussagen gemacht werden, von denen die Betroffenen gar nichts wissen. Ich erinnere mich, dass dies der Fall war, als wir für ein Mädchen wegen der Beziehung zu ihrem ungläubigen Freund gebetet hatten. Es kam das prophetische Wort, dass dieser bald zu Jesus finden würde. Am nächsten Tag geschah dies, ohne dass jemand aus der Gebetsgruppe etwas dazu hätte beitragen können. Auch hier könnte man Gottes Wirken wegerklären, was ich jetzt aus Platzgründen nicht demonstrieren möchte.

Menschliches Erleben, also auch Erfahrungen mit dem Hören auf Gott, ist immer gedeutetes Erleben. Es wird von meinem Welt- und Menschenbild mitbestimmt, welches wiederum auf Glaubensentscheidungen basiert. Glaube ich, dass es Gott gibt oder glaube ich, dass es keinen Gott gibt? Für diese Sätze kann ich Beweise und Widerlegung suchen, doch ich werde dabei immer von meinen Annahmen ausgehen und entsprechende Erfahrungen machen.



Paweł Surma
(Poland)

Paweł Surma (Poland) is a psychotherapist, a member of the Association of Christian Psychologists in Poland, provides individual psychotherapy at the 'Bednarska' Psychological Centre of ACP in Warsaw. He also works with 12 Steps to Living Life to the Full recovery workshop groups. He is 12-step Live at Last recovery workshop leader and supervisor.

He is particularly interested in integrating spirituality into psychotherapy practice and expressing the spiritual through poetry.

A POEM: life in me

as my prayer happens
you happened to me
an ordinary day inside
with a man I hardly see

you're my sunrise after dusk
when the light is never fine
need your deeply looking eyes
and the water turned to wine

entered the impossible
what I know is trust in you
I love life and die when loving
everything in me is true

Comment to

„The Three Levels of Ministry with the Gifts of the Spirit “

The article seems to be the author's testimony of faith, taking some closer look at the dynamics of his inner growth, an effort made to seek the true nature of God letting people experience love through the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit.

The author, reflecting on his ministry, has come to realise that we can develop not through rejection, but acceptance. Only then are we able to let go of our limitations and truly experience the working and power of the Holy Spirit.

What seems to be indispensable in understanding how God communicates himself to us is

the notion of relationship. If there is a gift there must be a giver. If there is someone who asks a question, there must be someone who gives the answer. Such cause and effect relationship appears to be intrinsic to what we have come to perceive as God's intervention in life. Christian teachings indicate that the gifts are given for the sake of the community – the Body of Christ and cannot be viewed as independent of the Giver – the Holy Spirit.

In Christianity it is believed that God is intrinsically relating to himself (The Trinity) and invites people to be a part of his inner life which is love. God the Father communicates with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Being immersed in the

Spirit we participate in Christ communicating with the Father.

There are many different gifts, which besides transforming one's life, have the power to connect one person with another, as it happens within the Holy Trinity. Definitely, God cherishes diversity as an expression of life, a realm of countless possibilities. If there are many possibilities, there will also be coincidences. Yet, randomness does not contradict the communication of love taking place. It appears a necessary space for streaming freedom. This communication, however, due to some maladaptive mechanisms developed by being deprived of true love, can - to a great extent - be distorted.

The author of the article believes that in God we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17: 28). Being immersed in God, we are meant to radiate his life to others. This, however, does not happen automatically. We need to say 'Yes' to God to participate in his loving our brothers and sisters. It is supposed to be our conscious choice, the choice of trust in God's unceasing care and compassion.

Our faith, by granting us access to God's love, makes us participate in his healing power and thus lets us experience it being passed on to those who crave for love (intercessory prayer).

Since we are vulnerable, we tend to see love as an expression of our own effort and take credit for God's work. Forgetting that God is the ultimate source of our existence, we fall into a trap and wrongly think that we are not connected with each other, either. Such a belief leads us to living a life of loneliness and full of despair.

Another important issue brought up in the article that can help us see God's presence and action, are experiences which transcend our human cognition. The author refers to situations in which we ask God for specific things that other people do not know of. It would be illogical, to say the least, if God - whose essence is love - did not reveal himself in every aspect of everyday life.

Moreover, it seems that God gives himself to us not by force, but by respecting our freedom.

There is absolutely no violence in God. That is why, the gifts and charisms need to be asked for.

A prophetic word, as in the example described in the article, is by no means a way of God imposing anything on the people involved in the situation. The word is given to make space for experiencing love. We all know that love cannot be experienced when we try to force it on somebody. The ministry of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is like a magnifying glass that is meant to help you focus on the One who loves you. It is up to you, or rather to your image of God, whether you let yourself experience love the way it comes or not. It seems crucial to be free of any scenario and try not to limit God to our narrow perception.

As humans we tend to attribute to God our human traits, which might be a way of making God somewhat closer to us, but most often it does more harm than good. Since our experience of relationships with other people is often marked by rejection and abandonment, we project it onto God. As a result, we do not trust that God is willing to take care of us in every little thing we deal with and we do not believe that he does so through other people, and neither by touching our own hearts and minds. Because of the antropomorphisation of God we do have a huge problem with the mystery of the Incarnation of God. It is so hard to see God permeate everything and at the same time remain separate as a person. It is also next to impossible to see ourselves as being God by total immersion in him and simultaneously preserve our identity. It seems that it is a big challenge to give up attributing our thoughts, intuitions, convictions, perceptions to God. The author of the article emphasises the above by admitting that he himself at some point of his ministry realised that God was much greater than anything he could imagine and that his sense of identity came from being loved rather than from his ministry alone.

As life unfolds, we are exposed to various situations. All depends on the way we perceive them and respond to them. This is influenced by our mentality, beliefs, convictions, social and

cultural background, and personal decisions. If we respond with trust that we are loved by God, the truth is revealed and we experience freedom to love in return, and so the communication of love is taking place and others are being touched by grace.

God, being love, is not isolated from us, then. He embraces us through the mystery of life, lets us experience himself through ourselves, other people and the world. Staying in touch with the

truth of his love for us, we are his prophets connected through his Holy Spirit. This requires humility and coming to terms with the reality. As humans we try to capture what is beyond our intellectual capacity, but still too often fail to see what is accessible by love.

Love makes it possible for us to discover that we are all connected, and that life as it is, is complete and that the outer self is never to replace the Christ-like inner self.





Katrin Kroll
(Germany/Deutschland)

Katrin Kroll, trained as an educator, studied Christian psychology at the IGNIS Academy, Germany, Christian counselor (IGNIS), psychotherapy (HeilprG), focusing counseling, supervisor

"I am touched by God's heart for people. That's why I love researching and teaching here at IGNIS how people can be supported in their development and how God himself meets them."

Current tasks: Board member at IGNIS, management and speaker in the area of children, youth and family, speaker in the counselor course.

Living and Working with a Friend – How Spiritual Gifts Take Shape /

In 2024, we had a gathering of friends at our IGNIS Academy entitled 'Celebrating and learning with friends'. It was nice to welcome people with whom we have already experienced very different things in the courses and on many paths together: learning together, battling together, laughing together, crying together, working together and much more. And then, in the summer of 2024, we sat in our IGNIS garden and celebrated and enjoyed the experiences and relationships that had developed together.

This memory came back to me when I set about writing this text. Werner asked me to write about my collaboration with the Holy Spirit in therapeutic practice, supervision and teaching.

I feel it is like going through the different phases of life and work with a very close friend and spending time together intensively. And today I am sitting here at my desk with a coffee cup and writing down, together with this very friend, what we have experienced together.

Of course, I don't know how this will sound to you, dear reader. Does it perhaps seem unusual to you? Do you find the relationship with the Spirit of God described here inappropriate? How do you experience the spirit of God in your

Leben und Arbeiten mit einem Freund - Wie sich Geistesgaben herausbilden

In 2024 hatten wir in unserer IGNIS Akademie ein Freundestreffen mit dem Titel „Feiern und Lernen mit Freunden“. Es war schön, Menschen willkommen zu heißen, mit denen wir in den Kursen und auf vielen gemeinsamen Wegen schon ganz unterschiedliche Dinge erlebt haben: gemeinsam lernen, gemeinsam ringen, gemeinsam lachen, gemeinsam weinen, gemeinsam arbeiten und vieles mehr. Und dann saßen wir im Sommer 2024 in unserem IGNIS-Garten und feierten und genossen die gemeinsam gewachsenen Erfahrungen und Beziehungen.

Diese Erinnerung kam in mir auf, als ich mich daransetzte, diesen Text zu schreiben. Werner hat mich gebeten, über meine Zusammenarbeit mit dem Heiligen Geist in der therapeutischen Praxis, in Supervision und Unterricht zu schreiben.

Ich empfinde das so, wie mit einem sehr innigen Freund durch die verschiedenen Phasen des Lebens- und Arbeitsweges zu gehen und gemeinsam intensiv Zeit zu verbringen. Und heute sitze ich hier an meinem Schreibtisch mit einer Kaffeetasse und schreibe zusammen mit eben diesem Freund auf, was wir gemeinsam erlebt haben.

Ich weiß natürlich nicht, wie das für Sie, liebe Leserin, lieber Leser so klingt. Mutet das für Sie

life and work? It would be very exciting to enter into dialogue with all of you, across different cultures, languages and denominations. Unfortunately, we can't do that today, but, with all due modesty, I can report on the experiences I have had – without wishing to say that it would have to look like this always and for everyone. I am opening my heart and my experiences in recent years and letting you share them.

My original background is in the Evangelical Lutheran Church here in Germany. I knew the Holy Spirit 'from afar' from the biblical text and the liturgy of our church services. Even as a child, I learnt to respect him as part of the Divine Trinity and to approach him humbly. Strictly speaking, however, I didn't know exactly how to do this. I already knew the Father and Jesus better and was more familiar with turning to them in my everyday life and sharing my worries and needs with them, as well as my joy and gratitude. Later, as a young adult, I got to know other brothers and sisters who also turned intensively to the Holy Spirit and experienced that Jesus sends us this 'Comforter' directly. The immediacy of the experiences that other Christians reported to me shocked me on the one hand and on the other, something in my heart was touched. Jesus speaks about the Spirit in a way that has always led me to assume that a relationship with him could mean more than just distant worship. The question of how I could find such contact with the Holy Spirit occupied me - both for my very private life of faith, as well as in my studies of Christian psychology and the subsequent therapeutic and supervisory training and, of course, in my work as a lecturer.

When I look back today, I have to smile...

My relationship with the Holy Spirit began like all relationships. We first had to get to know each other. In the beginning, I received all kinds of descriptions from others about what the Spirit does and doesn't do, wants and doesn't want. I tried to experience the Spirit in church services and prayer times. Together with others, I studied the Bible and relevant literature to find out how 'it works'. In the initial client contacts, the question arose as to how spiritual content and actions could be part of the 'treatment'. There were controversial discussions between Christians and non-Christians,

vielleicht ungewohnt an? Empfinden sie die beschriebene Beziehung zum Geist Gottes als unpassend? Wie erleben Sie den Geist Gottes in Ihrem Leben, ihrer Arbeit? Es wäre sehr spannend mit Ihnen allen, über die verschiedenen Kulturen, Sprachen und Denominationen hinweg, dazu ins Gespräch zu kommen. Leider können wir das heute nicht tun, aber ich kann Ihnen in aller gebotenen Demut berichten, welche Erfahrungen ich gemacht habe – ohne damit sagen zu wollen, dass das immer und für jeden ebenso aussehen müsste. Ich öffne mein Herz und die Erfahrungen der letzten Jahre und lasse Sie teilhaben.

Ich komme von meiner Prägung her ursprünglich aus der evangelisch-lutherischen Landeskirche hier in Deutschland. Den heiligen Geist kannte ich aus dem biblischen Text und der Liturgie unserer Gottesdienste „von Ferne“. Schon als Kind habe ich gelernt, ihn als Teil der Dreieinigkeit Gottes hochzuachten und mich ihm demütig zu nähern. Genau genommen wusste ich jedoch nicht, wie das geht. Den Vater und Jesus kannte ich schon besser und war vertrauter damit, mich an die beiden in meinem Alltag zu wenden und ihnen meine Sorgen und Nöte, genauso wie meine Freude und meine Dankbarkeit mitzuteilen.

Später als junge Erwachsene lernte ich andere Glaubensgeschwister kennen, die sich auch dem Heiligen Geist intensiv zuwandten und Erfahrungen damit machten, dass Jesus uns diesen „Tröster“ direkt schickt. Die Unmittelbarkeit der Erlebnisse, die mir andere Christen berichteten, erschreckten mich einerseits und andererseits war auch etwas in meinem Herz berührt. Jesus spricht über den Geist in einer Art, die mich schon immer annehmen ließ, dass die Beziehung zu ihm nicht nur distanzierte Verehrung bedeuten könnte. Die Frage, wie ich einen solchen Kontakt zum Heiligen Geist finden könnte, beschäftigte mich – sowohl für mein ganz privates Glaubensleben als auch im Studium Christlicher Psychologie und den darauffolgenden therapeutischen und supervisorischen Ausbildungen und natürlich auch in meiner Arbeit als Dozentin.

Wenn ich heute zurückblicke, muss ich schmunzeln... Meine Beziehung zum heiligen

between Christians of different views, between the professionals and there were times when I was quite frustrated. Sometimes it seemed to me that there was too little work of the Spirit, sometimes too much and disturbing.

On the one hand, I was fascinated by the quick intervention of the Spirit, on the other hand, I wished for development and growth. In some places I experienced deep emotional changes, in other places I could hardly or not at all perceive any development.

Today, the Spirit and I sit here in my study and laugh together about the impatience of that young woman and therapist. And today I am once again deeply touched by the tenderness and patience, the authority and clarity with which the Spirit has walked and continues to walk this path with me.

If I am now to describe in concrete terms what I have experienced, three major areas come to mind, which are based on the Holy Scriptures: the fruits, the gifts and the ministries of the Spirit. I would like to give you an excerpt of my learning and experience in these three areas.

Fruit of the Spirit

“The fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, abstinence.” (Galatians 5:22 - 23; Elberfelder translation)

It took me a while to realise that the Spirit of God first of all has a special interest in my heart. In very different life and work situations, the Spirit has touched me again and again over the years so that growth can occur. He has trained me to be patient with myself and others. He is a great role model for me in kindness and goodness towards my clients. I first had to spell out many of the terms that the Galatians text touches on. For example: what does love mean in my private and professional relationships? What does peace look like in the shared struggle in the learning journey with clients in practice? What does it look like with employees for whom I am responsible? What is abstinence like in everyday life, what is it like with compulsive clients?

I can't name all the questions and tricky puzzles of the last twenty years. But I would like to testify that I have come to know a very loving and attentive gardener in the Spirit of God, who has

Geist begann wie alle Beziehungen. Wir mussten uns zunächst einmal kennenlernen. Am Anfang erhielt ich die unterschiedlichsten Beschreibungen von anderen über das, was der Geist tut und nicht tut, will und nicht will. Ich habe versucht, in Gottesdiensten und Gebetszeiten den Geist zu erleben. Gemeinsam mit anderen habe ich die Bibel und entsprechende Literatur studiert, um herauszufinden, wie „das funktioniert“. In den beginnenden Klientenkontakten kam die Frage auf, wie spirituelle Inhalte und Handlungen Teil der „Behandlung“ sein könnten. Es wurde kontrovers diskutiert, zwischen Christen und Nichtchristen, zwischen Christen verschiedener Sichtweisen, zwischen den Fachleuten und es gab Momente, da war ich ziemlich frustriert. Mal war es mir zu wenig Wirken des Geistes, mal zu viel und verstörend. Auf der einen Seite war ich fasziniert von dem schnellen Eingreifen des Geistes, andererseits wünschte ich mir Entwicklung und Wachstum. An manchen Stellen erlebte ich tiefe emotional verändernde Erfahrungen, an anderen Stellen konnte ich die Entwicklung kaum oder gar nicht wahrnehmen.

Heute sitzen der Geist und ich hier in meinem Arbeitszimmer und lachen gemeinsam über die Ungeduld der jungen Frau und Therapeutin. Und ich bin heute nochmals tief berührt, mit welcher Zartheit und Geduld, mit welcher Vollmacht und Klarheit der Geist diesen Weg mit mir gegangen ist und noch geht.

Wenn ich jetzt konkret beschreiben soll, was ich erlebt habe, kommen mir drei große Bereiche in den Sinn, die sich an der Heiligen Schrift orientieren: die Früchte, die Gaben und die Ämter des Geistes. In Auszügen möchte ich Ihnen meinen Lern- und Erlebnisweg in diesen drei Bereichen darstellen.

Frucht des Geistes

Die Frucht des Geistes aber ist: Liebe, Freude, Friede, Langmut, Freundlichkeit, Güte, Treue, Sanftmut, Enthaltbarkeit (Galater 5, 22 – 23; Elberfelder Übersetzung)

Es hat ein bisschen gedauert, bis ich verstanden habe, dass der Geist Gottes zunächst ein besonderes Interesse an meinem Herzen hat. In ganz unterschiedlichen Lebens- und Arbeitssituationen hat der Geist mich über die Jahre immer wieder berührt, damit ein Wachstum ent-

devoted himself to taking care of the fruit. And I have also experienced 'pruning' when strange uncontrolled growth has occurred and I have, for example, confused the peace of God with a false desire for harmony. How did the Spirit do that? Sometimes by speaking directly into my heart, sometimes through the teachers along my spiritual path and in many places in great, surprising creativity through a child, a lorry tarpaulin, a commercial, a passage from a book, an impairment, a moment in nature and much more.

Gifts of the Spirit

"Now there are diversities of gifts of grace, but it is the same Spirit; (...) For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit; to another miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Corinthians 12:4 + 8-11; Elberfelder translation)

In addition to the patient training in growth with regard to the fruits of the Spirit, I was of course also concerned with the effects that the Spirit wants to bring about in people, known as 'gifts of the Spirit'. Of course, my learning process with regard to the gifts of the Spirit was closely linked to that with regard to its fruits. So you can imagine that as a young woman I was desperate to have the gift of healing to bring relief from God to my clients. It took me a long time, together with the Holy Spirit, to realise that in my particular case, my experience of supernatural healing was very sporadic. However, I have realised that I have developed the gift of taking a very long time to go through the complex process of working through a trauma. The spectacular results tend to be seen retrospectively and require a constant struggle for patience, peace and love. Just a few days ago, I realised with a client that she is very grateful to the Holy Spirit and to me for having walked this path with her. In her perception, the very intense trauma consequences in her life were very life-threatening and she experiences it intensely as a process of healing that she is still alive.

stehen kann. Er hat mit mir geübt, geduldig mit mir und anderen zu sein. Er ist mir ein großes Vorbild in Freundlichkeit und Güte gegenüber meinen Klienten. Viele der Begriffe, die der Galatertext berührt, musste ich erst durchbuchstabieren. Ein Beispiel: Was heißt denn Liebe in meinen privaten und beruflichen Beziehungen? Wie sieht denn Friede im gemeinsamen Ringen im Lernweg mit den Klienten in der Praxis aus? Wie mit Mitarbeitern, für die ich Verantwortung trage? Wie lebt sich Enthaltensamkeit im Alltag, wie ist das bei zwanghaften Klienten?

Ich kann gar nicht alle Fragen und kniffligen Rätsel der letzten zwanzig Jahre benennen. Aber ich möchte bezeugen, dass ich im Geist Gottes einen sehr liebevollen und zugewandten Gärtner kennengelernt habe, der sich hingebungsvoll immer wieder um seine Früchte kümmert. Und ich habe erlebt, dass ich durchaus auch „Beschneidung“ erlebt habe, wenn da seltsamer Wildwuchs entstand und ich zum Beispiel den Frieden Gottes mit falscher Sucht nach Harmonie verwechselt habe. Wie der Geist das gemacht hat? Manchmal durch direktes Reden in mein Herz, manchmal durch die Lehrerinnen und Lehrer meines geistlichen Weges und an vielen Stellen in großer, überraschender Kreativität durch ein Kind, eine LKW-Plane, einen Werbespot, eine Buchpassage, eine Beeinträchtigung, einen Moment in der Natur und vieles andere mehr.

Gaben des Geistes

„Es gibt aber Verschiedenheiten von Gnadengaben, aber es ist derselbe Geist; (...) Denn dem einen wird durch den Geist das Wort der Weisheit gegeben; einem anderen aber das Wort der Erkenntnis nach demselben Geist; einem anderen aber Glauben in demselben Geist; einem anderen aber Gnadengaben der Heilungen in dem einen Geist; einem anderen aber Wunderwirkungen; einem anderen aber Weissagung, einem anderen aber Unterscheidungen der Geister; einem anderen verschiedene Arten von Sprachen; einem anderen aber Auslegung der Sprachen. Dies alles aber wirkt ein und derselbe Geist und teilt jedem besonders aus, wie er will.“ (1. Korinther 12, 4 + 8-11; Elberfelder Übersetzung)

In this area, too, it has of course been a process of research and learning for me to get to know the various gifts and to assess whether they wish to develop in my life and, if yes, how this can look as far as my work is concerned.

There is, for example, the question of whether I can share an impulse about the other person's future or an insight into their questions. Of course, this looks different depending on whether my listener is a fellow Christian from the church or a client, a relative or a friend. I had to learn to acquire good test criteria myself so that I didn't misrepresent my own impulses as those of the Holy Spirit. But it was even more important to support my counterpart in accepting the words communicated in a mature way and to categorise how he or she wanted to deal with the information. This was a long learning journey, especially in the therapeutic process and in supervision, and I keep realising that it is good to keep learning how to communicate my impulses and ideas in a supportive and encouraging way. But it was also exciting to experience how the Spirit supports, heals, admonishes or limits growth through this gift in a way that goes far beyond my human, therapeutic or supervisory knowledge and skills.

I could repeat these processes now for all gifts of the Spirit. It has been exciting and fun, frustrating and challenging to understand which gifts I have and which I don't, which gift can or should be used when and when better not, and overall to progress in my maturity as a person. I am still learning .

Offices

'And some God has appointed in the church, first as apostles, secondly others as prophets, thirdly as teachers, then miracle workers, then gifts of grace for healings, help, guidance...' (1 Corinthians 12:28; Elberfelder translation)

In various places in the Bible, we are told that the Holy Spirit guides people to fulfil certain 'ministries'. In the context of the various texts, it becomes clear that this is very closely linked to the fruits and gifts of the Spirit, meaning that a ministry is not a particularly highly remunerated social position, but rather God's way of making the gifts and fruits of the Spirit as useful as possible for the community. So there are people who create new structures, others who te-

Neben dem geduldigen Wachstumstraining hinsichtlich der Früchte des Geistes beschäftigten mich natürlich auch die als „Gaben des Geistes“ bezeichneten Wirkungen, die der Geist in Menschen hervorbringen möchte. Natürlich war der Lernprozess hinsichtlich der Gaben des Geistes bei mir eng mit dem in Bezug auf seine Früchte verbunden. So kann man sich sicher vorstellen, dass ich als junge Frau unbedingt die Gabe der Heilung haben wollte, um meinen Klienten Linderung von Gott her zu schenken. Es hat lange gedauert, bis ich zusammen mit dem Heiligen Geist herausgefunden habe, dass ich als Person in meinem speziellen Fall Erfahrungen mit der übernatürlichen Heilung nur sehr punktuell mache. Allerdings habe ich gemerkt, dass sich in mir die Gabe entwickelt, mit sehr langem Atem die aufwändigen Prozessheilungsschritte einer Traumabarbeitung mitzugehen. Die spektakulären Ergebnisse sind dort eher retrospektiv zu sehen und brauchen immer wieder das Ringen um Langmut, Frieden und Liebe. Mit einer Klientin habe ich erst vor einigen Tagen festgestellt, dass sie dem Heiligen Geist und mir sehr dankbar ist, dass wir den Weg mit ihr gegangen sind. In ihrer Wahrnehmung ist es so, dass die sehr intensiven Traumafolgen in ihrem Leben sehr lebensbedrohlich waren und sie es intensiv als Prozess der Heilung erlebt, dass sie noch am Leben ist. Auch in diesem Bereich ist es natürlich für mich ein Forschungs- und Lernprozess gewesen, die verschiedenen Gaben kennen zu lernen und einzuschätzen, ob sie sich in meinem Leben entwickeln möchten und wenn ja, wie das genau auch in Bezug auf meine Arbeit aussehen kann.

Da ist zum Beispiel die Frage, ob ich einen Impuls über die Zukunft des anderen oder eine Erkenntnis zu seinen Fragestellungen in mir mitteilen kann. Das sieht natürlich jeweils unterschiedlich aus, je nachdem ob mein Zuhörer ein Mitchrist aus der Gemeinde oder ein Klient, ein Angehöriger oder ein Freund ist.

Ich musste lernen, selbst gute Prüfkriterien zu erlernen, damit ich eigene Impulse nicht falsch als die des Heiligen Geistes ausbebe. Aber noch wichtiger war, auch mein Gegenüber darin zu unterstützen, die mitgeteilten Worte mündig aufzunehmen und selbst einzuordnen, wie er oder sie mit der Information umgehen möchte.

ach, others who open and provide spaces of hospitality.

These complex task structures have very different places in the community. For example, it is not as important for helping and supporting shepherds to correct as it is for encouraging and challenging teachers.

During my life's journey, I have had to learn above all which of my tasks I can fulfil and how. Overall, I see myself more as a 'shepherd' who accompanies others with care and healing skills and supports their respective development paths. This is clearly different from the approaches of the prophets, apostles and teachers, but it is no worse or better.

It took a long time before I was able to assess my 'task' in relation to both the church and society as a whole. And I am certainly still learning.

On the one hand, this involves going on long journeys with clients, providing them with protected learning spaces alongside all my therapeutic, diagnostic and professional skills. On the other hand, as the leader of a Christian organisation, I always have to rethink my role as a 'shepherd' when it comes to corrective, structural or managerial tasks. For example, I cannot make organisational decisions based (only) on therapeutic considerations or deal with clients according to market criteria.

Here again, I feel the friendly guidance of the Spirit in developing fruit and gifts in my ministry in a meaningful way, acting humbly and dealing with the mistakes and failures of my endeavours.

Of course, it has not only been my task in recent years to develop my contact with the Spirit and to gain experience. I also enjoy accompanying my clients in their learning situations and am always touched by how lovingly and clearly the Spirit guides people.

I would also like to show you the life developments of two people with two of the possible spiritual gifts - the descriptions are based on real experiences, but I have of course changed the circumstances and data.

Das war vor allem im therapeutischen Geschehen und in der Supervision ein langer Lernweg und ich stelle immer wieder fest, dass es gut ist, weiter zu lernen, wie ich meine Impulse und Ideen unterstützend und fördernd mitteile. Aber es war auch spannend mitzuerleben, wie der Geist durch diese Gabe Wachstum unterstützt, heilt, ermahnt oder begrenzt in einer Art und Weise, die weit über mein menschliches, therapeutisches oder supervisorisches Wissen und Können hinausgeht.

Diese Abläufe könnte ich jetzt für alle Gaben des Geistes wiederholen. Es war spannend und lustig, frustrierend und herausfordernd, zu verstehen, welche Gaben ich habe und welche nicht, welche Gabe wann eingesetzt werden kann oder sollte und wann besser nicht, und insgesamt als Person in meiner Reife voranzuschreiten. Ich lerne immer noch .

Ämter

„Und die einen hat Gott in der Gemeinde eingesetzt erstens als Apostel, zweitens andere als Propheten, drittens als Lehrer, sodann Wunderkräfte, sodann Gnadengaben der Heilungen, Hilfeleistungen, Leitungen...“ (1.Korinther 12,28; Elberfelder Übersetzung)

An verschiedenen Stellen wird uns in der Bibel erklärt, dass der Heilige Geist Menschen darin anleitet, bestimmte „Ämter“ zu bekleiden. Im Kontext der verschiedenen Texte wird klar, dass dies sehr eng verknüpft ist mit den Früchten und Gaben des Geistes, ein Amt also nicht eine besonders hoch dotierte soziale Stellung darstellt, sondern vielmehr die Art Gottes ist, die Gaben und Früchte des Geistes für die Gemeinschaft möglichst gut nutzbar zu machen. So gibt es Menschen, die neue Strukturen schaffen, andere, die lehren, wieder andere, die Räume der Gastfreundschaft öffnen und zur Verfügung stellen.

Diese komplexen Aufgabengefüge haben sehr unterschiedliche Stellen in der Gemeinschaft. So ist es für den helfenden und unterstützenden Hirten nicht so vorrangig zu korrigieren wie für den fördernden und herausfordernden Lehrer.

Auf meinem Lebensweg musste ich vor allem lernen, welche meiner Aufgaben ich wie füllen

Tina

Tina is in a home group together with five others. She is usually a silent listener on the evenings, but is very happy to join in. Tonight, Joel has done the preparation. His home group evenings always put the members in suspense, because he has very high expectations when it comes to working with the scheduled Bible text. He prepares a lot of content and is also great at presenting it, but the house group members sometimes feel overwhelmed and under pressure. Anna is older and has problems with hearing. When Joel asks a question towards the end of the home group evening, she doesn't understand straight away and asks about it. Joel reacts angrily and says something hurtful to her. An oppressive silence ensues.

Tina says into the silence: 'Joel, we really appreciate your gift of providing us with so much good information. But sometimes you overwhelm us with the quantity. Could it be that this comes across to you as rejection? I don't mean it that way. I think you have a great knowledge of the Bible. Thank you for your intention to take us further.

But I don't think you should attack Anna for her hearing problems like that. We are all equally valuable here and everyone is allowed to be here with their strengths and weaknesses.'

Tina's surprising statements get a very good conversation going.

Simon, the home group leader, speaks to Tina as she walks home: 'That was great earlier. You really have a gift from the Spirit of God!'

On the way home, Tina wonders what Simon could have meant by that.

Tina is 28 years old and a social pedagogue. After graduating, she started working in a centre for people with physical disabilities. She loves her day-to-day work with the people she looks after, enjoys socialising with her colleagues and feels that she is in the right place.

She is often asked how she gets on with the people she looks after when so many of them can't speak. Tina has already thought about that. Somehow, she has an intuitive 'connection' to her residents and the rather slow pace of everyday life at the centre is also good for her. She has known this since she was a child: she has always noticed a lot of things that other

kann. Insgesamt verstehe ich mich eher als eine „Behirtende“, die andere mit Fürsorge und Heilungskompetenz begleitet und ihre jeweiligen Entwicklungswege fördert. Das unterscheidet sich klar von den Herangehensweisen der Propheten, Apostel und Lehrer, aber ist nicht schlechter oder besser.

Es hat lange gedauert, bis ich meine „Aufgabe“ sowohl in Bezug auf die Gemeinde, als auch in Hinsicht auf die Gesamtgesellschaft einschätzen konnte. Und sicher lerne ich da auch immer weiter.

Zum einen gehört dazu, dass ich mit Klienten lange Wege gehe, Ihnen geschützte Lernräume und mein ganzes therapeutisches, diagnostisches und fachliches Geschick zur Verfügung stelle.

Zum anderen gehört dazu, dass ich als Leiterin einer christlichen Organisation mein Amt als „Behirtende“ auch immer neu durchdenken muss, wenn es um korrigierende, strukturgebende oder leitende Aufgaben geht. So kann ich eben Organisationsentscheidungen nicht (nur) nach therapeutischen Gesichtspunkten treffen und mit Klienten nicht nach marktwirtschaftlichen Kriterien umgehen.

Auch hier wieder spüre ich die freundliche Begleitung des Geistes darin, in meinem Amt Früchte und Gaben sinnvoll zu entwickeln, demütig zu agieren und mich mit den Fehlern und dem Scheitern meiner Wege auseinanderzusetzen.

Natürlich war es in den vergangenen Jahren nicht nur meine Aufgabe, meinen Kontakt mit dem Geist zu entwickeln und Erfahrungen zu machen. Auch meine Klienten begleite ich gerne in ihrer Lernsituation und bin immer wieder berührt davon, wie liebevoll und klar der Geist Menschen anleitet.

Gerne stelle ich Ihnen dazu noch die Lebensentwicklungen von zwei Personen mit zwei der möglichen Geistesgaben vor – die Darstellungen orientieren sich an wirklichen Erfahrungen, aber ich habe natürlich Lebensumstände und Daten verändert.

Tina

Tina ist zusammen mit fünf anderen in einem Hauskreis. Meist ist sie an den Abenden stille ZuhörerIn, aber sehr gerne mit dabei. Heute

children don't notice. And even as a very young child, she learnt to talk to Jesus about the things she had no solution for. In her perception, Jesus also answered her.

She has always been a little anxious and quickly overwhelmed by complex situations, so it was a great help to her that she was able to talk to Jesus as a child. Her mum knew this and accompanied her kindly. However, she was a single mum and had to work a lot, so Tina and her younger brother often had to cope on their own.

Later on, it was difficult for Tina to find her way in broader social situations. She struggled to get through school and was often tired and tense because she felt overstimulated by so many impressions. The children's and youth groups at church were also rather exhausting for her, even though she always went because she knew that her mum wanted her to.

As an adult, it was good for Tina that she was able to study social work at a smaller university of applied sciences. The manageable groups there suited her. She now tends to avoid the big events at church, but feels quite at home in her home group.

Simon, her home group leader, has often been amazed at the deep insights the reserved young woman expresses when she does speak. After the event with Joel, a development starts.

Walter

Walter sits in the church meeting and is annoyed, as he so often is. The renovation of the worship room is discussed and many concerns are expressed.

The debate drags on for a long time and centres on the teams, the materials and, ultimately, the worries about funding. At some point, Walter's collar bursts: 'What kind of followers of Christ are you all? After much prayer, we have decided to go ahead with the renovation and I am sure that the Lord will give us everything we need and that we also have the talented people here. Your unbelief is outrageous!'

His statement starts an argument that the pastor is only able to end with difficulty. The discussion about the renovation is postponed and everyone goes home depressed.

Abend hat sich Joel vorbereitet. Seine Hauskreisabende versetzen die Mitglieder immer wieder mal in Spannung, denn er hat sehr hohe Ansprüche an die Arbeit mit dem aktuellen Bibeltext. Dazu bereitet er viel Inhalt vor, kann diesen auch toll vorstellen, aber die Hauskreisbesucher erleben sich manchmal überfordert und unter Druck. Anna ist schon älter und hat Probleme mit dem Hören. Als Joel gegen Ende des Hauskreisabends eine Frage stellt, versteht sie es nicht gleich und fragt nach. Joel reagiert verärgert und äußert sich ihr gegenüber verletzend. Es entsteht eine drückende Stille.

Da sagt Tina in die Stille: „Joel, wir schätzen deine Gabe wirklich, uns so viel gute Informationen zukommen zu lassen. Aber manchmal überforderst du uns auch mit der Fülle. Könnte es sein, dass das bei dir als Ablehnung ankommt? Das ist so nicht gemeint. Ich finde, du hast ein tolles Wissen zur Bibel. Danke für deine Absicht, uns weiterzubringen.

Aber ich finde, es geht nicht, dass du Anna für ihre Hörprobleme so angehst. Wir sind hier alle gleich wertvoll und jeder darf mit seinen Stärken und Schwächen da sein.“

Tinas überraschende Aussagen bringen ein sehr gutes Gespräch in Gang.

Simon, der Hauskreisleiter, spricht Tina beim Nachhausegehen an: „Das war ja großartig vorhin. Da hast du echt eine Gabe vom Geist Gottes!“

Tina rätselt auf dem Nachhauseweg, was Simon damit gemeint haben könnte.

Tina ist 28 Jahre alt und Sozialpädagogin. Nach dem Studium hat sie begonnen, in einer Einrichtung für Menschen mit Körperbehinderungen zu arbeiten. Sie liebt ihren Alltag mit den betreuten Menschen, genießt den Umgang mit den Kollegen und fühlt sich dort am richtigen Platz.

Sie wird oft gefragt, wie sie mit den betreuten Personen zurechtkommt, wenn doch so viele von ihnen nicht sprechen können. Das hat Tina auch schon überlegt. Irgendwie hat sie einen intuitiven „Draht“ zu ihren Bewohnern und außerdem tut ihr das eher langsame Tempo im Alltag in der Einrichtung gut.

Das kennt sie schon aus ihrer Kindheit: Sie hat immer ganz viel wahrgenommen, was andere Kinder nicht wahrnehmen. Und sie hat schon



Walter is 68 years old. He had a very difficult childhood. He is the second child of a couple who had to bear the brunt of his father's situation, who returned late from internment after the Second World War traumatised by the war. The young couple had two children within a short space of time and the challenges of caring for two babies put a lot of strain on both of them. The father often suffered from nightmares and had frequent fits of rage during the day. The mother remained silent and tried to calm her husband, herself and the children with tears. Walter's sister, who was one year older, developed into a very anxious child, whereas he was a courageous little boy.

It often happened to him that he knew things before they happened. His mother smiled at the 'predictions' the little boy was able to make soon after he had learnt to speak - but usually said nothing about it. The father, on the other hand, often reacted aggressively and angrily to his son.

In one situation, Walter told the father 'Dad, you need a new job!' and it actually happened that the employer sacked the father shortly afterwards. The father came home and took all his disappointment and anger out on the boy. He beat him for a long time and shouted that he didn't want to hear anything more from him 'for the rest of his life' if he could only utter curses.

Something closed up in Walter's heart. The courageous and lively boy became a quiet and withdrawn young man. He trained as a carpenter, got married and had two children of his own with his wife.

At the end of the 1990s, he and his wife were converted at a Baptist tent evangelisation. During the event, he noticed how God spoke to him and invited him to come back to Him. He immediately recognised the familiar inner voice and joyfully surrendered his life. However, the time that followed was difficult for Walter and his wife. He found it difficult to be part of the group in the church. Over the years, he had begun to act grumpily and withdrawn in his dealings with people, and this repeatedly led to conflicts in the congregation – especially because he was often "right" in his content, but was very aggressive in his presentation.

als ganz kleines Kind gelernt, mit Jesus über die Dinge zu reden, für die sie keine Lösung hatte. In ihrer Wahrnehmung hat Jesus ihr auch geantwortet.

Sie war schon immer ein wenig ängstlich und schnell überfordert von komplexen Situationen und deshalb war es ihr eine große Hilfe, dass sie als Kind mit Jesus reden konnte. Ihre Mama wusste das und begleitete es freundlich. Allerdings war sie alleinerziehend und musste viel arbeiten, sodass Tina und ihr kleinerer Bruder oft alleine zurechtkommen mussten.

Später war es für Tina schwierig, sich in umfassenderen sozialen Situationen zu orientieren. Sie kam mit Mühe durch die Schule und war oft müde und angespannt, weil sie sich dort von so vielen Eindrücken überreizt fühlte. Auch die Kinder- und Jugendgruppen in der Gemeinde waren für sie eher anstrengend, auch wenn sie immer hinging, weil sie wusste, dass ihre Mama sich das wünschte.

Als erwachsene Frau war es für Tina gut, dass sie an einer kleineren Fachhochschule soziale Arbeit studieren konnte. Die überschaubaren Gruppen dort kamen ihr entgegen. Mittlerweile vermeidet sie in der Gemeinde die großen Veranstaltungen eher, fühlt sich aber in ihrem Hauskreis ganz wohl.

Simon, ihr Hauskreisleiter, war schon häufiger verblüfft, welche tiefen Erkenntnisse die zurückhaltende junge Frau ausspricht, wenn sie denn mal spricht. Nach dem Ereignis mit Joel kommt eine Entwicklung in Gang.

Walter

Walter sitzt in der Gemeindeversammlung und ärgert sich, wie so oft. Es wird über die Renovierung des Gottesdienstraumes gesprochen und viele Bedenken werden geäußert.

Die Debatte zieht sich lange hin und es geht um die Teams, die Materialien und letztlich auch um die Angst wegen der Finanzierung. Irgendwann platzt Walter der Kragen: „Was seid ihr eigentlich alle für Nachfolger Christi? Wir haben nach reiflichem Gebet entschlossen, dass wir die Renovierung angehen, und ich bin mir sicher, dass der Herr uns alles geben wird, was wir brauchen, und dass wir auch die begabten Menschen hier haben. Euer Unglaube ist ja unerhört!“

After the meeting, the pastor cautiously speaks to Walter and attempts to understand what had motivated Walter to make this statement. Walter explains that he is absolutely certain that the renovation is right and that he knows from God that they should start now.

But he also says that he repeatedly doesn't know how to deal with his inner impressions and when he should share them.

In Walter's case too, a development begins.

With Walter and Tina, we are introduced to two people who, although they are very different, have something in common: They experience things internally that they are not always or not always well able to convey externally. They have a talent that sometimes causes them stress.

If we try to understand the two people in our example as they are today, we see a mixture of developments that have contributed to how they behave and use their gifts.

Tina reacts very keenly to social attention and is a very sensitive person in general. She needs a lot of space to retreat.

As a child, she experienced a friendly supporter in her mother, but still had to get through all the challenges of our school system.

She learnt to recognise situations of overstimulation and to organise her living conditions in such a way that the quantity of incoming stimuli remains at a level that she can cope with.

Through direct dialogue with Jesus, she developed a very intense and supportive relationship with him during her childhood. Of course, her childhood experiences also play a role here, when she had to bridge times of being alone and her ability to hear God well helped her. It is wonderful and amazing that she not only hears his voice, but often also gains a special insight.

Walter grew up as an open-minded and courageous child with an incipient prophetic gift in a family traumatised by war. Due to his father's violence and his mother's excessive demands, he developed a lot of inner anger and also a fear of showing his nature and his gift. As a result, his inner strength and his prophetic vision sometimes lead to things erupting, unfortunately, leaving one or two bruises on himself and others.

Seine Aussage lässt einen Streit beginnen, den der Pastor nur mit Mühe wieder beenden kann. Die Diskussion um die Renovierung wird vertagt und alle gehen bedrückt nach Hause.

Walter ist 68 Jahre alt. Er hatte eine sehr schwierige Kindheit. Er ist das zweite Kind eines Elternpaares, das schwer an der Situation des Vaters zu tragen hatte, der nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg kriegstraumatisiert spät aus der Gefangenschaft zurückkam. Innerhalb von kurzer Zeit bekam das junge Paar zwei Kinder und die Herausforderungen spannten die beiden sehr an. Der Vater litt häufig unter Albträumen und hatte tagsüber immer wieder Wutanfälle.

Die Mutter schwieg und versuchte, den Mann, sich selbst und die Kinder unter Tränen zu beruhigen. Walters ein Jahr ältere Schwester entwickelte sich zu einem sehr ängstlichen Kind, wohingegen er ein mutiger kleiner Junge war.

Ihm passierte es häufig, dass er Dinge schon wusste, bevor sie passierten. Die Mutter nahm mit einem Schmunzeln auf, welche „Vorhersagen“ der kleine Junge bereits bald, nachdem er Sprechen gelernt hatte, treffen konnte – sagte aber meist nichts dazu. Der Vater hingegen reagierte oft aggressiv und wütend auf seinen Sohn.

In einer Situation sagte Walter dem Vater „Papa, du brauchst eine neue Arbeit!“ und es kam tatsächlich so, dass der Arbeitgeber den Vater kurz danach entließ. Der Vater kam nach Hause und ließ seine ganze Enttäuschung und Wut an dem Jungen aus. Er schlug ihn lange und brüllte, dass er „sein ganzes Lebtag lang“ nichts mehr von ihm hören wollte, wenn er doch nur Flüche aussprechen könne.

In Walters Herz verschloss sich etwas. Aus dem mutigen und lebendigen Jungen wurde ein stiller und verschlossener junger Mann. Er machte eine Schreinerlehre, heiratete und bekam mit seiner Frau selbst zwei Kinder. Ende der 90er Jahre bekehrte er sich zusammen mit seiner Frau auf einer Zeltevangelisation der Baptisten. Er bemerkte in der Veranstaltung, wie Gott ihn ansprach und einlud, zu ihm zurückzukommen. Sofort erkannte er die vertraute innere Stimme und übergab freudig sein Leben. Allerdings war die darauffolgende Zeit für Walter und seine Frau schwierig. Es fiel ihm schwer, Teil der Gruppe in der Gemeinde zu sein. Im Laufe der Jahre hatte er begonnen, mürrisch und verschlossen

He experienced how his father, by forbidding him to say things, has blatantly interrupted his childlike courage to come forward with the information he has received. This had a profound impact on his adult development. Not only does no-one explain to him why he knows more than others and what this means, but through his father he is bound to a fixed self-conception that links his inner information with a negative evaluation.

Both people had the opportunity to set out, each at their own time of life, and understand what gift they have been given by God and how this has been shaped by their life experiences. On the one hand, it can help them if they receive positive and supportive feedback from the congregation: it would be possible, for example, for Tina to be regularly asked by her home group members about their perceptions and inner impressions.

One option would be for Walter to be told that his information is helpful, but that the way he has expressed causes considerable hurt. It could be particularly difficult for him to accept feedback at first because he has had negative previous experiences with criticism.

Tina might find it easier because she has already experienced support from her mum.

However, the experience of appreciative, positively corrective and encouraging feedback is helpful for both of them.

At times when spiritual gifts are developing, we tend to place a special focus on the spiritual areas of life.

During the times when spiritual gifts are developing, we tend to place a special focus on the spiritual areas of life.

This is also important and helpful so that development takes place in a protected way, but it harbours the danger that this area of life becomes overemphasised.

For all the joy that reigns in the throne room of God over the use of spiritual gifts, we are more than 'just' our spiritual gift. Moreover, we will find it easier to digest difficulties in this area if there are other areas of life that are alive.

It is therefore advisable to always make sure that all other areas of life - family, work, circle

im Umgang mit Menschen zu agieren, und das führte in der Gemeinde immer wieder zu Konflikten – ganz besonders, weil er oft inhaltlich „recht hatte“, dies aber sehr aggressiv vorbrachte.

Der Pastor spricht Walter nach der Gemeindeversammlung vorsichtig an und versucht zu verstehen, was Walter bewegt hat, seine Aussage zu treffen. Walter beschreibt, dass er sich ganz sicher ist, dass die Renovierung richtig ist, und dass er von Gott her weiß, dass sie jetzt starten sollen.

Aber er erzählt auch, dass er immer wieder nicht weiß, wie er mit seinen inneren Eindrücken umgehen und wann er sie mitteilen soll.

Auch bei Walter beginnt eine Entwicklung.

Mit Walter und Tina lernen wir zwei Menschen kennen, die, obwohl sie sehr unterschiedlich sind, doch etwas gemeinsam haben: Sie erleben innerlich Dinge, die sie nicht immer oder nicht immer gut nach außen transportieren können. Sie haben eine Begabung, die sie mitunter auch in Stress bringt.

Versuchen wir, unsere beiden Beispielpersonen zu verstehen, wie sie heute sind, sehen wir eine Mischung an Entwicklungen, die mitgewirkt haben, wie sie sich verhalten und ihre Gaben einbringen.

Tina reagiert sehr sensibel auf soziale Wahrnehmung und ist überhaupt in ihrer Wahrnehmung ein sehr sensibler Mensch. Sie braucht viel Rückzugsraum.

In ihrer Mutter erlebte sie als Kind darin eine freundliche Unterstützerin, musste aber trotzdem durch

alle Herausforderungen unseres Schulsystems hindurchkommen. Sie lernte, Überreizungssituationen zu erkennen und ihre Lebensumstände so zu gestalten, dass die Menge der einströmenden Reize in einem Maß bleibt, das für sie zu bewältigen ist.

Über das direkte Gespräch mit Jesus entwickelt sich in ihrer Kindheit eine sehr intensive und stützende Beziehung zu ihm. Natürlich spielen da auch die Kindheitserfahrungen mit, in denen sie Zeiten des Alleinseins überbrücken musste und ihr die Fähigkeit, Gott gut zu hören, geholfen hat. Es ist großartig und erstaunlich, dass sie nicht nur seine Stimme wahrnimmt, son-



Like the mountains are around Jerusalem,
the Lord is all around His people.

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of friends, hobbies, other voluntary work and, last but not least, relaxation, enjoyment and recreation - receive positive attention alongside the spiritual learning space.

Tina certainly needs spaces for retreat and encounters where she can simply be, without too many stimuli overloading her sensitivity. She should also make sure that she keeps seeking personal encounters with Jesus - not just when exercising the gift of knowledge.

Walter needs areas of life that help him to feel valuable and seen. His experience of rejection in his family of origin has made it difficult for him to build social relationships. It is therefore all the more important that his adult relationships now develop not only within the use of the prophetic gift, but also to cultivate the private relationship level in family, congregation and his circle of friends. It does him good to feel that he is seen as a man, a human being and a friend, without the fulfilment of tasks playing a role.

All gifts of the Spirit are intended for use in contact between people.

This is not always easy, especially when those who have the gift also encounter limits in their social skills.

The path of learning and development that someone can take in exercising spiritual gifts also depends very much on what information is available in the specific system (e.g. church, family, home group) about the gift and its application and what the relevant rules are.

It will certainly be easier for Tina to dare to share her insights if the home group is open to all gifts of the Spirit and if specific time slots for exercising her gift can be created from time to time (e.g. if the home group leader invites Tina to share her ideas).

Walter is also dependent on his learning path being supported by good framework conditions in the congregation. Especially in situations where his previous experiences cause him to react more aggressively, he would need a group that both knows how to receive prophetic messages and has experience in dealing with aggression in a social context.

dern oft noch eine besondere Erkenntnis eröffnet bekommt.

Walter wuchs als aufgeschlossenes und mutiges Kind mit einer beginnenden prophetischen Gabe in einer Kriegstraumafamilie auf. Durch die Gewalt des Vaters und die Überforderung der Mutter hat er viel innere Wut und auch Angst entwickelt, sich mit seinem Wesen und seiner Begabung zu zeigen. So führen seine innere Kraft und sein prophetisches Sehen manchmal dazu, dass sich die Dinge wie eruptiv Raum schaffen und dabei leider auch die eine oder andere Beule bei ihm selbst und anderen hinterlassen.

Er hat erlebt, wie der Vater durch sein Verbot, Dinge auszusprechen, seinen kindlichen Mut, sich mit den erhaltenen Informationen zu zeigen, krass unterbrochen hat. Dies prägt zutiefst seine erwachsene Entwicklung. Nicht nur, dass ihm niemand erklärt, warum er mehr weiß als andere und was das bedeutet, er wird durch den Vater an eine Festlegung gebunden, die seine inneren Informationen mit einer negativen Bewertung verbindet.

Beide Personen dürfen sich, jede zu ihrer jeweiligen Lebenszeit, auf den Weg machen und verstehen, welche Gabe sie von Gott geschenkt bekommen haben und wie diese durch ihre Lebenserfahrungen geformt wurde. Dabei kann ihnen zum einen helfen, wenn sie positive und unterstützende Rückmeldungen aus der Gemeinde bekommen: Tina könnte von ihren Hauskreismitgliedern regelmäßig nach ihrer Wahrnehmung und ihren inneren Eindrücken gefragt werden.

Walter könnte gesagt bekommen, dass seine Information hilfreich ist, die Art und Weise seiner Äußerung allerdings eher verletzt. Besonders für ihn könnte es zunächst schwierig sein, Rückmeldungen gut anzunehmen, weil er negative Vorerfahrungen mit Kritik hat.

Tina könnte sich da leichter tun, weil sie im Kontakt mit ihrer Mutter schon Unterstützung erlebt hat.

Doch für beide ist die Erfahrung von wertschätzender, positiv korrigierender und ermutigender Rückmeldung hilfreich.

In den Zeiten, in denen sich geistliche Gaben entwickeln, neigen wir dazu, einen besonderen Fokus auf die geistlichen Bereiche des Lebens zu legen.

Das ist auch wichtig und hilfreich, damit Entwicklung geschützt stattfindet, birgt aber die Gefahr, dass dieser

Lebensbereich eine überhöhte Bedeutung erhält. Bei aller Freude, die im Thronsaal Gottes über die Anwendung geistlicher Gaben herrscht, sind wir doch mehr als „nur“ unsere geistliche Gabe. Zudem werden wir Schwierigkeiten in diesem Bereich leichter verdauen, wenn es daneben Bereiche im Leben gibt, die lebendig sind.

Es empfiehlt sich deshalb, immer wieder darauf zu achten, dass neben dem geistlichen Lernraum alle anderen Lebensräume – Familie, Beruf, Freundeskreis, Hobbys, andere Ehrenämter und nicht zuletzt Entspannen, Genießen und Erholung – positive Aufmerksamkeit erhalten.

Tina braucht sicher immer wieder Rückzugs- und Begegnungsräume, wo sie einfach sein kann, ohne dass allzu viele Reize ihre Sensitivität überstrapazieren. Sie sollte auch darauf achten, die Begegnung mit Jesus immer wieder persönlich zu suchen – nicht nur innerhalb der Ausübung der Gabe der Erkenntnis.

Walter braucht Lebensbereiche, die ihm helfen, sich wertvoll und gesehen zu fühlen. Durch die Ablehnungserfahrung in seiner Herkunftsfamilie hat er Schwierigkeiten, soziale Beziehungen aufzubauen. Deshalb ist es umso wichtiger, dass sich seine erwachsenen Beziehungen jetzt nicht nur innerhalb der Anwendung der prophetischen Gabe, sondern auch in der Familie,

in der Gemeinde und im Freundeskreis auf der privaten Ebene weiterentwickeln. Es tut ihm gut, sich als Mann und Mensch und Freund gesehen zu fühlen, ohne dass irgendeine Leistung dabei eine Rolle spielt.

Alle Gaben des Geistes sind gedacht für die Anwendung im Kontakt zwischen Menschen. Das ist nicht immer einfach, besonders dann, wenn diejenigen, die die Gabe mitbringen, in ihren sozialen Möglichkeiten auch Grenzen erleben.

Welchen Lern- und Entwicklungsweg jemand für das Ausüben geistlicher Gaben gehen kann, hängt auch sehr davon ab, welche Informationen im konkreten System (z. B. Gemeinde, Familie, Hauskreis) über die Gabe und deren Anwendung vorhanden sind und welche Regeln es gibt.

Für Tina wird es sicher leichter sein, sich zu trauen, Erkenntnis mitzuteilen, wenn der Hauskreis zum einen eine Offenheit für alle Gaben des Geistes hat und zum anderen immer wieder konkrete Zeitfenster für die Ausübung ihrer Gabe entstehen können (z. B. wenn der Hauskreisleiter Tina einlädt, ihre Ideen weiterzugeben).

Auch Walter ist darauf angewiesen, dass sein Lernweg durch gute Rahmenbedingungen in der Gemeinde

unterstützt wird. Besonders in den Situationen, wo ihn seine Vorerfahrungen dazu bringen, aggressiver zu

reagieren, bräuchte er eine Gruppe, die sowohl weiß, wie sie prophetisches Reden aufnimmt, als auch Erfahrungen im Umgang mit Aggressionen im sozialen Kontext hat.



Walter Thiessen
(Canada)

Walter Thiessen is Professor of Counselling Psychology at St. Stephen's University, a graduate school focusing on hybrid programs in theology, peace and reconciliation. He also has a private counselling practice (St. Croix Counselling Services) and is the author of *Glimpses of a Good Life*. He and his wife, Carol, have raised three children in St. Stephen, NB (Canada) and love gardening, walking, and drinking coffee on the patio. Walter's studies have focused on the personal and communal search for a life of wholeness.

Comment to

„Living and Working with a Friend – How Spiritual Gifts Take Shape“

It is good to see someone like Katrin Kroll share an awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit in her own life and work as well as in the lives of others around her. Her framing of this presence as "friendship" is reflected also in the gentle sensitivity that she displays as she comments on her examples.

I resonate with the importance of this inner friendship with the Spirit, and she reminded me of recently encountering the words of contemplative theologian, Howard Thurman (who greatly inspired Martin Luther King Jr.), when he wrote: "There is in you something that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself.... If you cannot hear the sound of the genuine in you, you will all your life spend your days on the end of strings that someone else pulls" (from a Baccalaureate address, 1980). How badly we all need to grow in our confidence in hearing that "sound of the genuine," and this is what I hear reflected in Kroll's article.

For me the discernment around what is Spirit and what is personal intuition is so fine and precious that we need to treat it very carefully both in ourselves (i.e. guarding against expressing our own thoughts as if they had divine authority) as well as in others (i.e. guarding against quenching what could be the Spirit's voice in others who may disagree with us). For this reason, I most often imagine my own spirit and God's Spirit as conversing and interacting in a secret place, and what I consciously "hear" is the fruit of this conversation. I always assume that such insights are a mixture that enables, and necessitates, both humility and confidence. I appreciated the way that Kroll sensitively supports the people in her examples as they grow in practicing and expressing that discernment.

Welcome to the Institute!

The Christian Psychology Institute (CPI) is America's first training center and think tank committed to a biblically rooted, Christ-centered, science-informed vision of psychology and therapy.

Join our growing movement of therapists, pastors, and lay counselors seeking to bring Christ back to the center of their therapy and soul care!

Our Commitment

We are convinced Jesus Christ is the true center of all soul-healing. We are committed to God's revelation concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ and to working out the inestimable psychotherapeutic value of having him at the center of one's relational universe.

With Christ at the center of therapy and soul care, we may be assured that we are offering God's very best to the hurting and broken. He is not only God's way to find healing for our souls, he's our perfect role model, the goal of our lives, and the one who will lovingly abide with us for eternity.

Eric L Johnson, PhD

Founder & Scholar-in-Residence

Eric founded CPI ten years ago while working full-time in higher education. Since his retirement from Houston Christian University in May 2024, Eric has been working to establish the Christian Psychology Institute as a national hub for training and certification in Christ-Centered Therapy.



<https://www.christianpsychinstitute.org/>



Michael A. Strating, Ph.D., C.Psych.,
Assistant Professor of Psychology,
Redeemer University, Ancaster, ON

Michael A. Strating
(Canada)

"Why would you describe yourself as a Christian psychologist?"

Questions to Michael Strating (Canada)

May I first ask how it came about that you studied psychology?

As a teenager, I was unsure what my strengths and interests were and I was very anxious and uncertain about what career God was calling me to. I knew that I enjoyed math and the sciences and I liked the idea of being able to walk alongside people in their suffering. This led me to seek undergraduate studies in biology at a secular university with vague aspirations of becoming a general physician. However, over the course of the first year, I began to feel that the biology program seemed not to be as good of a fit for me personally as I had anticipated it being.

Meanwhile, I had been intrigued by a philosophy course that I completed in high school, so I also took a couple of elective courses in philosophy and psychology during my first and second year of university. At the time, I took these courses purely for interest's sake, assuming that these courses were – at most – tangential detours on my career path. However, as I became more uncertain about the biology program, I contacted my high school philo-

sophy teacher to ask for his feedback about a potential transition into a philosophy program. I told him that I didn't want to be limited to teaching and writing books for a living, so he asked me if any other subjects had caught my attention and I began to reflect on psychology. At the time, I had never met any psychologists or counsellors in my own church community, so I was unsure whether or not psychology could be compatible with a Christian worldview. As we talked, he helped me to articulate two significant insights. First, I began to see psychology as a discipline that is interested in the questions of philosophy, which it attempts to answer using scientific methods, thereby connecting these two areas of personal interest. Second, I realized that I was most interested in supporting individuals at a personal and emotional level, rather than a medical level per se. Psychology seemed to be a natural fit.

This was the moment when I first began to discern God's providential hand guiding me toward a career as a clinical psychologist. I began my journey into psychology with the discovery that God had already placed me on this path before I even realized that He did. Soon after-

ward, I sought out two Christian counsellors who were willing to share their experiences and advice about pursuing a career as a Christian in the field of counselling and psychology. I am grateful to God for sending me these wise and patient listeners.

Why would you call yourself a Christian psychologist?

Once I decided to seriously consider pursuing a career in psychology, I started to wrestle more deeply with whether it was possible for psychology to be compatible with a Christian worldview and, if so, what it means to be a Christian in psychology. At the same time, my church, as a community, also seemed to be wrestling with similar questions. Historically, my church had emphasized the importance of correct doctrine and a relatively cognitive/intellectual approach to faith and life, regarding emotion and subjective experience with a high degree of skepticism and disdain. (Positively, this did lay a firm biblical foundation for my faith that kept me grounded through my secular education later on, for which I am grateful.) And yet, many people within the church were suffering from emotional and relational difficulties that didn't seem to improve with mere mental assent to biblical truth. The church began to recognize its growing need for counselling supports, but it did not trust the mental health system and had largely neglected to develop its own Christian counselling resources.

Perceiving this need, I sought out and read several books and articles by Christian authors to try to better understand how other Christians were approaching and thinking about psychology. Some espoused critical and skeptical views of psychology, whereas others held accepting and positive views of psychology, and I found myself landing somewhere in between. I appreciated and agreed with many of the criticisms regarding the shortcomings and distortions of contemporary psychology, especially related to its naturalistic and humanistic presuppositions which exclude God and spiritual realities. And yet, I had an intuitive sense that, as a

systematic way of observing human nature and activity, psychology seemed to be able to offer some valuable insights, despite these serious issues and limitations (which I have since come to associate with the term common grace). Rather than viewing psychology as something to be rejected in its entirety or accepted and embraced uncritically, I regard psychology as both limited/distorted and also redeemable. Eric Johnson's writings on Christian Psychology have been especially influential in this regard and I have been blessed to be able to call him a mentor and colleague since my early years on this journey.

I consider myself a Christian psychologist in the sense that I aspire to be a Christian psychologist who does psychology Christianly; that is to say that my practice as a psychologist is grounded in and flows out of a biblical, Christian worldview, rather than treating Christianity as a supplemental component added on to a foundation of contemporary psychology. This is because, I believe, all psychological theories and practices are influenced by our presuppositional worldview beliefs, whether implicit or explicit, which means that all non-Christian psychologies will be limited or distorted in some way and to varying degrees. Furthermore, insofar as we can discern and understand God's truth revealed in special and general revelation, I believe that distinctively Christian psychological theories and practices have the potential to offer the greatest explanatory power and clinical utility of any psychological model available. Lastly, I believe that Christian psychology is a means through which we can express and progress toward the telos, or chief end, of humanity (and, therefore, of psychology); namely, to glorify God and enjoy Him as pre-eminently good, true, and beautiful. This is what motivates and guides my work as a Christian psychologist.

What was the focus of your study/training? Did you get any results that you would especially like to emphasize?

I completed my Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the University of Windsor. Clinically, I received

training in cognitive-behavioural, psychodynamic, emotion-focused, acceptance and commitment, and integrative psychotherapies. Seeking to better understand emotion, I worked under the supervision of Antonio Pascual-Leone to study emotional awareness and emotion change processes in psychotherapy. Most notably, we conducted a brief therapy-analogue study comparing cognitive and emotion-focused interventions for lingering and unresolved feelings of anger in response to interpersonal grievances in clinical and subclinical samples. We found that cognitive reappraisal facilitated improvements in self-reported anger arousal, resolution, and forgiveness of interpersonal grievances, whereas identification of unmet psychological needs was associated with improvements in forgiveness in the subclinical sample, but not in the clinical sample.

I was fascinated by this research and I could see many similarities and differences between emotion-focused and Christian conceptualizations of anger, particularly in David Powlison's book *Good and Angry*. For example, both approaches see value in emotion and differentiate

between healthy and unhealthy forms of anger. Yet, emotion-focused therapy has a humanistic focus on the self whereas Christian approaches look beyond the self to God and others (without devaluing the self per se), identifying healthy anger as "assertive anger" versus "righteous anger," respectively.

My Ph.D. training had socialized me into a secularized approach to psychology, which left me as a functional integrationist rather than as a fully Christian Psychologist per se. What I mean by this is that my way of thinking about and approaching psychological topics began with contemporary psychology by default, after which I would apply a Christian lens or filter to discern which components were compatible with a Christian worldview and which components needed to be modified or discarded. While valuable in its own ways, what I desired to do instead was to start with biblical Christian conceptualizations of psychological topics from which we can build distinctively Christian models of psychology as alternatives to non-Christian psychologies.



What are your actual professional duties? Can you please tell us a little bit about your experiences?

Since completing my Ph.D. in 2021, I have sought opportunities to be re-socialized into a Christian worldview by immersing myself in a vibrant Christian academic community, which I found at Redeemer University where I have been serving as Assistant Professor of Psychology since 2022. Here I have had greater exposure to Christian theology and philosophy, which I hope will allow me to develop more biblical conceptual frameworks and methodologies from which to practice psychology in more distinctively and deeply Christian ways. So far, this has included efforts to rediscover the classical Christian soul care resources of the church, for example, in the writings of Soren Kierkegaard and the individual and communal spiritual formation practices of the church. At present, Eric Johnson and I have been working on a project called “Carditive Therapy” where we are developing ways of working with the “heart” in Christian soul care and counselling, based on a theory of Christian psychospiritual change deri-

ved from biblical and theological principles as well as empirical research on experiential and relational psychotherapies. It is an ambitious project, but one that I am very excited about.

My main responsibilities as a professor involve teaching undergraduate courses in abnormal psychology, positive psychology, theory and methods of counselling, and the psychology of spirituality. Currently, I have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of a new M.A. program in Counselling, which we plan to launch in the next couple of years, based upon the Christian Psychology approach that I described earlier. Psychotherapy and psychotherapy training are my passions, so I am looking forward to training Christian counsellors to counsel Christianly and contributing to the development of greater mental health resources in our church communities. In addition to teaching and service to the university, I also maintain a part-time clinical practice in the community working with individual adult clients seeking psychotherapy supports for a wide range of issues and concerns.



I can see that your life is full of interesting tasks. And you have a private life too. Has this been stressful? Do you have some concerns of your heart you will share with the readers?

I have a wonderful and supportive family and church community. My wife, Katelynn, and I have four children; Melody (10), Willem (8), Zachary (5), and Micah (3). My hobbies include playing goalie in ice hockey, hiking, biking, and rollerblading. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance as a graduate student and now as an early career psychologist has certainly been challenging and stressful at times, but mostly I am grateful that there are so many opportunities for me to serve God's kingdom in a variety of different ways. Living in a fallen world there are always many things we could be concerned about, especially given the challenges that Christians in North America (and around the world) are facing in our current sociopolitical climates. However, I am excited and hopeful about what God is doing in and through the church as I see more and more Christians seeking to live out their faith in boldness, truth, and love in whatever careers and callings God has given them. It is an exciting time to be a Christian in psychology and I am so thankful for the work that is being done by the readers of and contributors to this journal. May God continue to bless you and the work you are doing, for His glory and our collective good!

Former Interviews with a Christian Psychologist: „Why would you call yourself a Christian Psychologist?“

Agnieszka Wojsz (Poland)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/21/#p=115>

Nicholas DiFonzo (USA)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/20/#p=83>

Friedemann Alsdorf (Germany)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/19/#p=51>

Steven Voss (USA)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/18/#p=38>

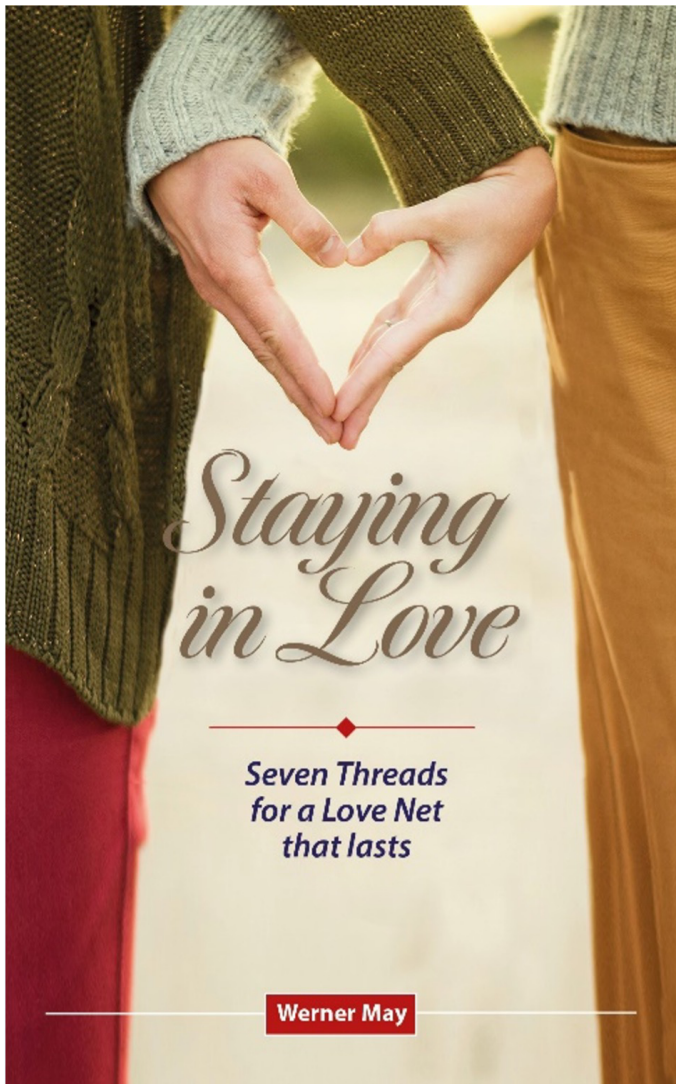
Päivimaria Kuivamäki (Finland)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/17/#p=32>

Olena Yaremko (Ukraine / Germany)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/16/#p=27>Werner May:

I am very happy that I can now offer you my small eBook "Staying in Love - Seven Threads for a Love Net that lasts".



Two friends wrote about it:

“Those who open up this little booklet will find it filled with gems of wisdom and grace that will strengthen their marriage and enrich their life.

Eric L. Johnson, Founder & Scholar-in-Residence, Christian Psychology Institute, Louisville, KY, USA

And Conny Hubbard: “I have experienced the different stages of love that this book talks about in my own marriage. I particularly liked the image of the threads that can be used to weave a net that holds love and provides security. That God Himself is the seventh thread, weaving the other threads into a strong web, gave me a feeling of incredible strength.

Conny Hubbard, Chaplain, Prayer Counselor, High Point, NC, USA

You can buy it here for 3 \$: [Click on the picture](#)



EMCAPP

European Movement for Christian
Anthropology, Psychology and
Psychotherapy www.emcapp.eu

A look back to the EMCAPP Symposium, organized by ACP Poland

Warsaw, November 10th – 12th 2024



Spiritual Aspects in Psychology and Psychotherapy



- Anna Ostaszewska (Poland) Spiritual Aspects in the Background of Psychotherapy
- Małgorzata Surma (Poland) Taking into account the patient's spirituality/religion in the psychotherapy process
- Joan D.A. Juanola (Spain) The integration of Christian anthropology in the university degree in psychology
- Ulla Dahlen (Finland) The Heart-House Model for Christian Psychotherapy
- Paloma Alonso Stuyck (Spain) Koumi Project which aims to heal sexual wounds

Workshops:

- Andrey Lorgus (Bulgaria/Russia) Self-realization or creativity and internal resources
- Stefano Parenti (Italy) Integral psychotherapy of the person, based on the anthropology of Thomas Aquinas
- Paweł Surma (Poland) 12 Steps To Living Life To The Full – A 12-Step Recovery Workshop as a Method of Integrating Spirituality in the Practice of Psychological Assistance

Using the seven statements of EMCAPP (<https://www.emcapp.eu/who-we-are>)

Werner May (Germany) the president of EMCAPP set the vision for the symposium: "Truth can be discovered in conversation between friends who are different. - We have experienced this at EMCAPP over the decades, and I am pleased to be able to continue this experience at this conference, and not just to see old friends, but to get to know more colleagues from different countries and denominations, for whom it is important to bring together psychology and Christian faith."

The lecture series opened with Anna Ostaszewska from Poland, Vice-President of EMCAPP: Spiritual Aspects in the Background of Psychotherapy.

Anna Ostaszewska (Poland), psychotherapist, supervisor, lecturer and trainer in psychotherapy is co-founder and the past president of the Association of Christian Psychologists in Poland (www.spch.pl), which organizes this symposium.

Anna reported about actual positions of Psychotherapy and Psychiatry, the Integrative Psychotherapy as a Christian Approach, specific subjects and techniques, and at last about Integration of spiritual dimension in psychotherapy.

Her conclusion: In the last 20-30 years psychotherapy and psychiatry are more and more interested in the importance of spirituality and religiosity in clinical praxis.

Psychotherapist's attitude should include typical professional knowledge and skills + knowledge about spiritual / religious issues + humility and inner openness for the Holy Spirit.

Małgorzata Surma (Poland), psychologist and psychotherapist, is the vice-president of the Main Board of the Association of Christian Psychologists in Poland (ACP www.spch.pl). Her lecture „Taking into account the patient's spirituality/religion in the psychotherapy process” was about: Distinguishing between spirituality and religiosity and between spiritual/religious maturity and immaturity – How does an anxiety, personality or psychotic disorder affect spiritual/religious experiences – Guidelines for the psychotherapist – and examples from her psychotherapy practice.

Joan D.A. Juanola (Spain) from the University Abat Oliba in Barcelona, Department of Psychology spoke about „The integration of Christian anthropology in the university degree in psychology“

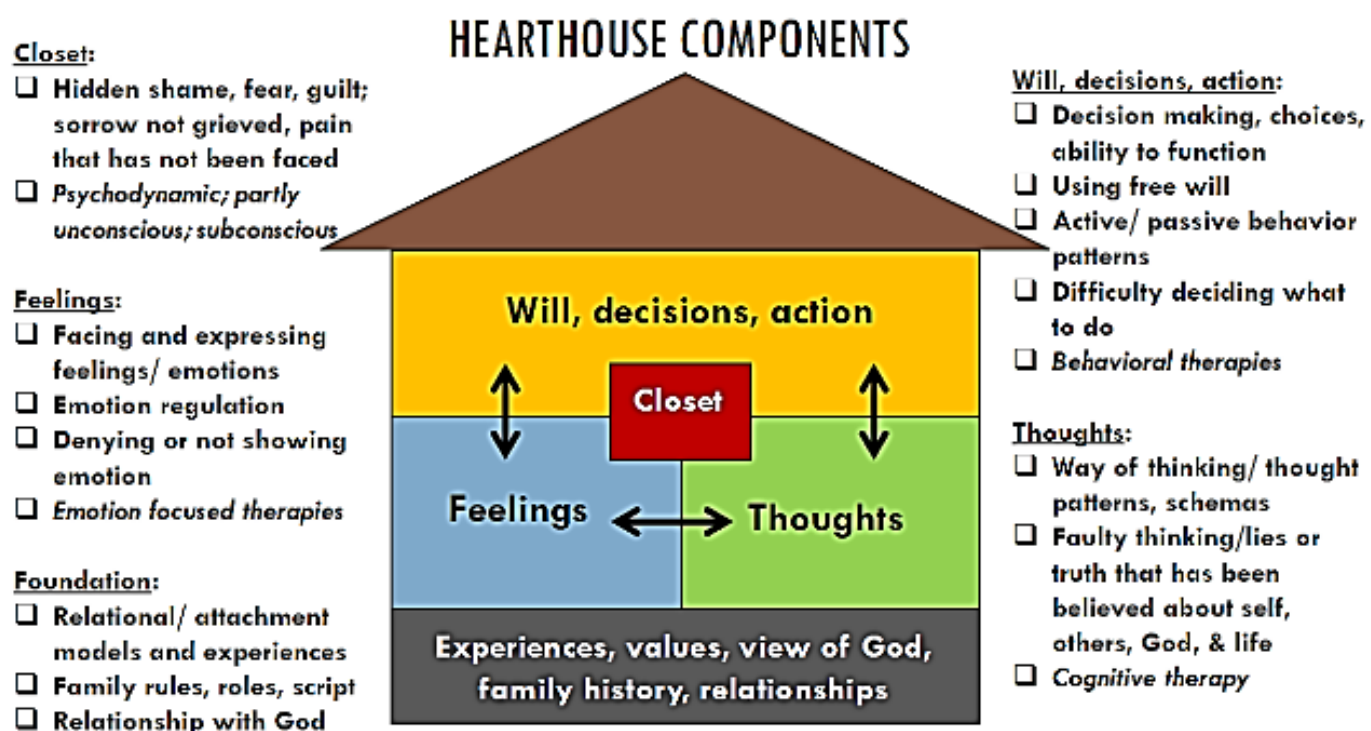
Here is the abstract of his lecture: Most universities seek to offer a technical education to future psychologists, through a thorough formation on methodology, statistics and biology. However, fewer of them offer any humanistic content, and nearly none of them offer an integrated scientific education with humanities.

Christian universities have the responsibility to present their degrees in connection with the Christian message and its anthropological basis, but, usually, they simply offer some subjects on theology or Christian ethics, while the rest of the subjects of the degree remain watertight from the implications derived from the Christian education received. This situation is the result of different causes that could be grouped under the phenomenon so called secularization.

Therefore, it is a must to be conscious about the secularization that scientific knowledge has suffered, that some refer as scientific naturalism, and to claim against the prejudices assumed towards Christian anthropology. This reductive point of view is especially inconvenient in Humanities and Social Sciences, and it has also a big impact in Psychology.

For the sake of truth and mental health, the best way to proceed in psychology degrees is to give an integrated explanation of the human being. Also, this will prepare future therapists to understand better their patients and the common human dilemmas.

Ulla Dahlen (Finland), PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision, presented „The Heart-House Model for Christian Psychotherapy“. The diagram can give you an impression of this model:



Paloma Alonso Stuyck (Spain), Professor at the Abat Oliba CEU University (Barcelona), Doctor in Psychology and Specialist in Family Therapy gave a lecture about „Koumi Project which aims to heal sexual wounds“. In her summary she wrote: ... Sexual wounds are understood in a broad sense, not only including those caused by sexual abuse, but also the damage caused by promiscuity and the trivialization of sexuality. It is not directed at people who are currently suffering sexual abuse, nor at minors, nor at cases involving legal issues.

Promiscuity and the trivialization of sexuality: because of an eroticized social environment, sexual relations begin at a very early age and infidelity or having multiple sexual partners has become normalized. Occasionally, it causes personal imbalances when the person feels they are being treated like an object. When the dignity of the person is hurt, their perception of themselves and the world is altered. This makes it difficult to maintain stable relationships and often leads to toxic, destructive relationships.

In the Koumi Project, it is Christ himself who goes out to meet the wounded person to lift them up and return them to the life of those who know they are loved by God. The training of the project members aims to enable them to provide personal support through theoretical and practical sessions with case analyses and simulations.

We also had several workshops:

- Self-realization or creativity and internal resources by Andrey Lorgus (Bulgaria/Russia)
- Integral psychotherapy of the person, based on the anthropology of Thomas Aquinas by Stefano Parenti (Italy)
- 12 Steps To Living Life To The Full – A 12-Step Recovery Workshop as a Method of Integrating Spirituality in the Practice of Psychological Assistance by Paweł Surma (Poland)

Another highlight was a Creative Spiritual Evening with poems by Anna Ostaszewska and songs by Marcin Styczeń (www.marcinstyczen.pl). He is a Polish singer, guitarist, composer, lyricist, journalist and lecturer. He is known for working together with poets and producing CDs, for example with Karola Wojtyła, the later Pope John Paul II.





About Us

This journal is published by the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy in cooperation with the IGNIS-Academy, Kanzler-Stürtzel-Str.2, D-97318 Kitzingen. EMCAPP as a non-institutional movement enjoys meeting Christian scholars and practitioner in the field of Christian anthropology, psychology, psychotherapy and counseling from all over the world and from most Christian traditions. We are focused on bringing together key persons from different countries. The richness of experience and background always stimulates and refreshes us.

This magazine is free and can be downloaded from our website. We appreciate everyone who recommends it.

Per year, two issues of the journal are planned.

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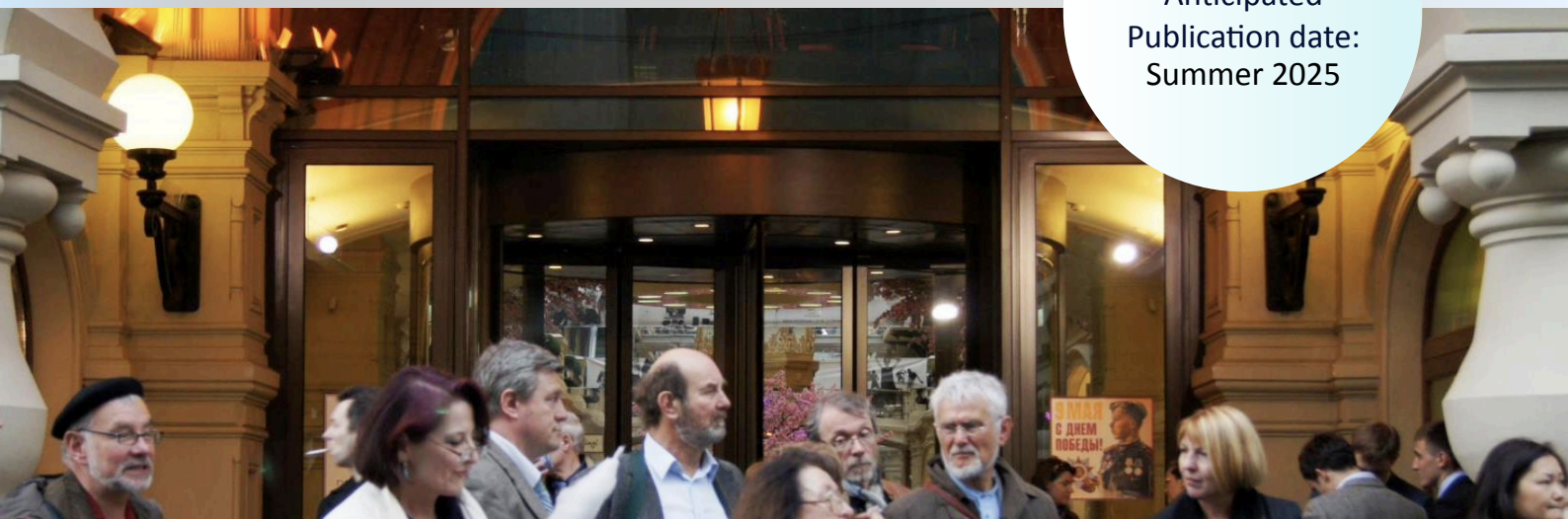
Many thanks to the numerous authors and the translators. Without their commitment and gifts this number would not exist.

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seven statements of emcapp



The seven statements of EMCAPP are as follows:

1. EMCAPP is based on the belief that there is a God who is actively maintaining this world, and therefore there cannot be any discussions about Man without talking about God.
2. EMCAPP acknowledges the limitations of all human knowledge and therefore appreciates the attempts of the various Christian denominations to describe God and their faith.
3. EMCAPP brings together international leaders and pioneers in the field of Christian psychology and psychotherapy and its underlying anthropology.
4. EMCAPP respects and appreciates the cultural and linguistic diversity of backgrounds of its members.
5. EMCAPP encourages its members to learn how to recognize each other as friends and brothers and sisters in Christ.
6. EMCAPP encourages its members in their national challenges and responsibilities.
7. EMCAPP has a global future and it is open to discourse and joint research opportunities around the world.