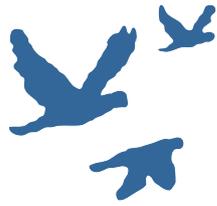


# The EMCAPP Journal



## Christian Psychology Around The World

### Some of the Main Articles

- On Christian Psychology: An interview
- Relational Theology and Relational Therapy
- On Teaching Forgiveness
- Guidance through the Holy Spirit during the counseling or therapy session: blessings and problems



Focus Country:  
Canada

## Editorial

About five years ago, I was in a car on a journey to the Netherlands. The remarkable thing was that Eric Johnson, President of the Society for Christian Psychology, USA, was sitting beside me and that each of us was working on his manuscript on a Christian psychology. Together with our wives, we wanted to travel to the roots of Eric's family, which went back to Holland, and we had declared the car's backseat to be our office.

In 1986, at the founding of IGNIS, the German Society for Christian Psychology, it was hardly imaginable that a collaboration of this kind could develop at some point, and, even today, I see it as a great blessing, but also as a sign that, in the meantime, Christian psychology has really become an important concern internationally.

As a result, I was able to set off on a journey to Canada (at my writing desk) around nine months ago to plan this number. I did not yet know exactly what kind of adventure I might be letting myself in for and began by making contact with some „old“ names I was familiar with. That was my starting point in this large country in which, in the course of the months, more and more pearls began to shine through, taking me as far as Vietnam.

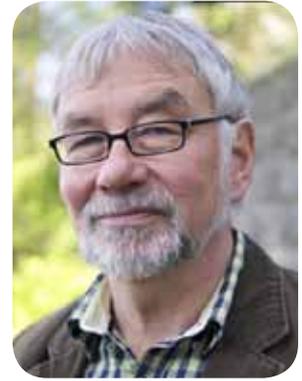
I would not like to claim that I have now explored Canada, not even in relation to the question of how the force-field between psychology and faith has developed there and presents itself today. My insight into the history and into the current situation in the country, including specifically the whole field of psychology there, is too limited and my personal contacts are too few. My only „Canadian“ encounter was with James Houston and Bruce Hindmarsh of Regent College in California at the end of 2013. (Here you can listen to “The Glory of a Human Being Truly Alive - James Houston and Bruce Hindmarsh on Christian Psychology” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvS4vdUzvqU>)

I must say that I am very glad to have had the privilege of collecting the various contributions by Canadian colleagues and brothers and sisters in faith, providing emphases that I have not found in this form in the other countries which have left their stamp on the previous numbers of the e-journal Christian Psychology Around The World.

And I would like to point to the contributions from around the world in the forum on a central topic of Christian psychology: “Guidance through the Holy Spirit during the counseling or therapy session: blessings and problems”.

Thanks to everyone for this splendid number.

Werner May, Germany



werner.may@ignis.de



This edition is accompanied by the artwork of Michael O'Brien. He is the author of twenty-eight books and since 1970 he has also worked as a professional artist and has had more than 40 exhibits across North America. “In all my work I seek to contribute to the restoration of Christian culture. I try to express the holiness of existence and the dignity of the human person situated in an incarnational universe.”



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# Around The World: The Contributors



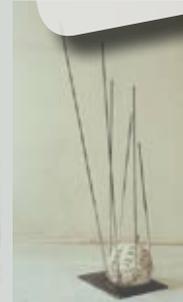


Click on the pictures, then you can read about the person

# Christian Psychology Around The World

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- Step by step we were lead - About the beginnings of the Association of Christian Psychologists (ACP) in Poland. Interview with Agata Rusak
- Krzysztof Wojcieszek: Nature of Despair
- Romuald Jaworski: The Role of Religious Trust in Overcoming Conflicts.
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- Anna Ostaszewska: Anxiety Therapy from the Perspective of the Integrative Psychotherapy: A Christian Approach
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- Agnes May: The living rhythm of healthy abilities
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- Wolfram Soldan: Process models in the field of healing in a Christian psychology with the inner forgiveness model as an example
- New Paths in AD(H)D Counselling. An interview with Joachim Kristahn
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- Elena Strigo: The psychic reality and the image of God in Christian psychotherapy – Case context and methods
- Olga Krasnikova: The specifics of the Christian Orthodox psychotherapy and consulting. Contemplations of a christian psychologist
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- Wolfram Soldan (Germany):  
Characteristics of a Christian Psychology
- Manfred Engeli: Understanding of Marriage and Final Marriage Counselling
- Samuel Pfeifer: Prayer – Psychodynamics, Effectiveness, Therapy
- René Hefti, Lars Kägi, Maria Drechsler:  
The value of empirical research for the clinical practice of a Christian specialist clinic for psychosomatics, psychiatry and psychotherapy
- Maria Drechsler: Religious coping and post-traumatic growth in the course of a trauma therapy
- Forum: Can neuropsychology find a fruitful place in Christian psychology?

Read our fourth number:  
Focus country: Switzerland  
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- Tim Sisemore: Grace Matters: A Christian Psychology Story
- Paul Watson: Babel of Rationalities: Christian Psychology, Incommensurability, and the Important Role of Empirical Research
- Eric Jones: The Roles of Automatic and Conscious Thought in Worldview Consistency
- Keith Houde: The Mystery of Persons: Catholic Foundations for a Psychology of Persons
- Ed Welch: A Christian Psychologist and Biblical Counselor?
- 2003-2013: On 10 years of the Society for Christian Psychology in the USA - Interview with Eric L. Johnson
- Paul C. Vitz and Jennifer M. Meade: Self-forgiveness in Psychology and Psychotherapy: a Critique
- Diane Langberg: The Role of Christ in Psychology
- Phil Monroe: Telling Trauma Stories: What Helps, What Hurts
- Contributions by Charles Zeiders and Dana Wicker: "What Role should Play the Interpretations of Dreams in a Christian Psychology?"

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### The main articles - Number 6

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- Toni Terho: ACC Finland, Christian Anthropology&Ethics
- Ari Puonti: What do Pastoral Carers and Christian Psychotherapists need Theology for? Theological Annotations for Professional Helpers
- Ritva Belt: Attachment Theory and Mother-Infant Psychotherapy Groups among Drug-Abusing Mothers
- Jorma Niemelä: The Role of Spirituality in Treatment and Recovery of Addiction
- Tarja Vilppola: Mission Possible. A Presentation of the Therapeutic Process of Adult Victim of Child Sexual Abuse
- Saara Kinnunen: A Case Study: How Individual Therapy can help with Marital Problems

Read our sixth number:  
Focus country: Finland  
Main articles in Finnish and English



**Michael Strating**

## **Introduction to the Canadian Contributions**

In terms of education and training opportunities in Canada, there are some Christian seminaries and universities that offer graduate level programs related to psychology and counseling. However, at this point in time there are almost no programs in Canada that are comparable to the Christian PhD and PsyD programs in the USA. Alternatively, the primary drawback in pursuing education at a secular Canadian university is that I must actively seek out critical discourse in psychology and personal interaction with the Christian academic community beyond my regular study and contact with colleagues at school.

Unfortunately, there are no formal societies or associations for Christian psychologists in Canada. So where does a young and aspiring psychologist like myself turn to find such a community? I was able to connect with a few Christian counselors and social workers I knew in my own community, but I predominantly looked south to find fellow Christians with a passion for psychology. As I set out on this journey only a few years ago I was blessed with the opportunity to meet individuals like Eric Johnson and others whose work is permeated with a love for God and His Holy Word. From there I have been introduced to Werner May and was delighted to discover that this work is being done by many others worldwide as well, as this journal attests to.

Admittedly, as a result of this sequence of experiences, in some ways this is as much an introduction to Christian scholarship in Canada for me as it is for many other readers of this edition. However, this does not mean that Christian psychology is absent in Canada. On the contrary, I have the pleasure of introducing you to some of the excellent work that is being done here as well. I hope you find, as I have, that Christian psychology is alive and growing, just as it is in many other regions of the world.

As I was familiarizing myself with previous issues of the EMCAPP journal, I was struck by several comments made by Werner in the Ger-

Michael Strating, B.A. Second year Master's student in the Adult Clinical Psychology program at the University of Windsor. Primary area of research is in psychotherapy process-outcome research with a focus on emotion change processes. He is also interested in the intersection of Christian faith with mental health and topics related to resilience and stress-related growth, personal identity, and the construction of life narratives, as well as the integration of theology and psychology more broadly.



man edition. In his introduction he addresses the limitations of psychology as being less than a perfect science, that is, as a means of gleaning objective truth in an absolute sense. As much as I enjoy learning about psychological theory, statistics, and research methods, its inherent fallibility is a concern that continually sticks with me. At times it even evokes a creeping sense of despair, knowing that psychology can never even remotely attain the status of the truths revealed in Scripture.

However, this is not to say that this work is futile. Many of us are convinced that, as a method of systematic study, psychology provides us with valuable insights into our lives when it is firmly grounded in the Scriptures and is held in close dialogue with Christian theology, philosophy, history, and community. And, when rooted as such, there is little reason to believe that Christian psychology cannot be advanced by critical and open dialogue with mainstream psychology as well. Given this prioritization I think it is also important that we maintain close dialogue with those in the Biblical/Nouthetic Counseling tradition as well. While awareness of the limitations of psychology may be frustrating at times, in many ways I see it as a corrective pulling us back to the real Source of Truth. In an interview with Werner May, Russ Kossits shares with us what such transdisciplinary

scholarship entails and how it can foster a Christian psychology that is richer and deeper than the “modern psychology baptized with Scripture” approaches that are prevalent today. Christian psychology will be strengthened if it is informed by various Christian traditions while increasing its presence in mainstream psychology. Such scholarship should be persuasive and will play a missional role, even if that is not the primary aim. Kosits envisions a discipline founded firmly upon God, the realization of which will require courage and humility in the face of great challenges as we strive to glorify Him.

Relationship is a central concept in both theology and psychology and we understand that man, as an image-bearer of God, is inherently a relational being. Relational therapy recognizes the importance of relationships and, as E. Janet Warren argues, reflects the relational characteristics of God. The task of the Christian psychologist, then, is to actively reflect God’s patterns of relating as an image-bearer in the therapeutic relationship. In a second article, E. Janet Warren calls for new metaphorical language to describe God’s dealing with sin. As an alternative to traditional spiritual warfare language, sin is represented as dirt and God exercises authority over sacred space through cleansing or “holy housekeeping”.

Sam Berg demonstrates how theological positions regarding the imago Dei influence the way we interact with clients. In contrast to original sin and total depravity, he argues that we need to see the inherent good in people and help them to recover the goodness that was in man before the fall. When we do, rather than seeing the person as the problem we will begin to see a person with a problem and respond accordingly.

Walter Thiessen outlines a theoretical two-dimensional model of spiritual development as an alternative to James Fowler’s popular faith development theory. The first dimension represents a continuum of maturity (complexity and integrity) while the second represents several recurring themes which individuals deal with throughout life.

One task of Christian psychology is the critical evaluation of existing theories and interventions in mainstream psychology. In his article,

Kelvin E. Mutter examines Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) practices and its appropriateness for use with Christian clients. He concludes that there is an essential incompatibility in the underlying meanings associated with MBSR and Christian spiritual practices which renders the “Christianizing” of MBSR techniques inappropriate.

Sharon Habermann shares with us how her faith has played a role in her work at a secular chronic pain clinic. She is encouraged by the openness of the healthcare profession to recognize clients’ spiritual and religious wellbeing as an important factor in the process of coping and healing. In a subsequent article, she also assembles a collection of Providence Theological Seminary student reflections on articles from EMCAPP’s 5th edition (USA). In these papers, students provide thoughtful discourse about inspiration they found in topics related to working out one’s identity as a Christian therapist, the neurological underpinnings of authentic change, and the implications of multiple rationalities and postmodern skepticism for Christian theology and psychology.

Reflecting on his experience as an educator at Trinity Western University, John Auxier observes how the culture of higher education often promotes an “obsessive-compulsive workaholicism” which inhibits student authenticity. He then goes on to describe how this led him to restructure a course on “Theological Issues in Counseling”. Rather than providing an overview of theological themes common to many client problems, the course instead focussed on the theme of forgiveness. This allowed for deeper reflection on, and critical evaluation of, a single area which not only served as a model for exploring other themes, but also enhanced students’ own spiritual formation as well.

Contemplative prayer is a deeply experiential encounter with the Mystery of God. Jackie Stinton shares her journey of discovery and practice of contemplative prayer and introduces these techniques to a small group of individuals. In her article she presents survey data collected from participants regarding their definition, meaning, experience, and objections to contemplative practices.

Expanding on Gilbert Durand’s theory of the

imaginary, Christian Bellehumeur and Thanh Tu Nguyen present a sample of their work with Vietnamese immigrants in Canada. In her doctoral dissertation, Nguyen demonstrates that the imaginary – the construction of symbolic representations of God (particularly images) – is related to an individual's understanding and feelings about God. Moreover, the imaginary appears to integrate and give meaning to life events and functions as a means of coping with existential anxiety. In a subsequent interview, Christian Bellehumeur further expands on his understanding of the imaginary and its importance to Christian psychology, tracing its roots from Gilbert Durand to his current program of research.

The Canadian edition concludes with a series of articles focussing on the work of Canada's most prolific and well-known Christian psychologist, David Benner. This section contains excerpts from some of Benner's previous works in which he discusses the implications of Biblical and theological insights (e.g., imago Dei, sin, and the incarnation) for therapy and the therapist's role. Wolfram Soldan then dialogues with Benner as he elaborates on the necessity of moral frameworks and Christ-like attitudes in therapy as pastoral conversation (i.e., listening to another while also speaking for God). Mike Sheldon then provides commentary as Benner explores humanity and what it means to become fully human. Finally, Benner shares his reflections as he looks back on these excerpts, emphasizing the importance of attending to the psychospiritual dynamics of the therapeutic process.

I have really appreciated the variety of topics and perspectives that have been presented in this edition. One of the most striking articles for me was the "original goodness" article by Sam Berg. "As iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17), Sam Berg has called me to wrestle with and refine my own understanding of man's sinful nature and I thank him for this. While I do not state the case quite as strongly as Sam Berg, there is certainly much value in identifying and encouraging individuals' gifts and strengths in the context of counseling (for example, I am reminded here of 1 Corinthians 12).

Thinking about this inherent goodness vs sinfulness discussion, I've conceived of a metaphor which, though imperfect, has helped me to understand this apparent paradox. To me, I think of the condition of man as being that of a broken and rusted classic car that was parked and left in a remote corner of a farmer's field decades ago. For all intents and purposes, the car has lost all innate material value that it once had, and yet we can still stand and marvel at what that scrap heap once was and what it still represents. In the same way, we are image-bearers of God and whatever is good in us is only that which reflects His Goodness worked in us by His Spirit.

Throughout this edition we are treated to the illustrations of artist and author, Michael O'Brien. As evidenced in the selections presented here, O'Brien sees "each visual image and each work of prose [as] an incarnation of a word, a statement of faith." He, like many psychologists, has faced professional pressure to exclude religion from his work, however, he has firmly committed himself to portraying explicitly Christian themes. The product and process of his artistry is bold and deeply devotional – certainly a great inspiration for all of us.

### **A Taste of Canada**

Canada is a culturally diverse nation with two official languages, English and French. Here is a taste of Canadian culture and our beautiful landscapes.

As the second largest country in the world, there is much to see and do: Canada - Keep Exploring or: Canada Shared by Canadians

Here's an overview of some of the most well-known cities in Canada: Cities of Canada

Two famous Canadian events are the Calgary Stampede: Calgary Stampede 2012 and the Winter Carnival in Quebec City: Carnaval de Québec

Werner May (Germany)

## About the Artist: Michael O'Brien

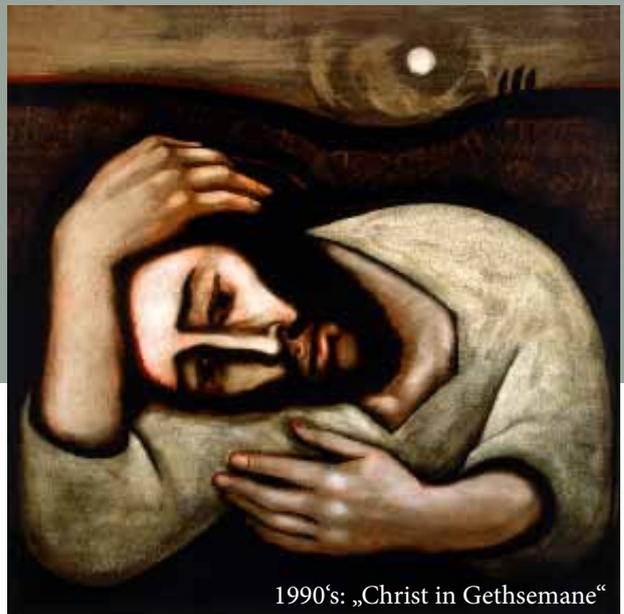


1970's: „Family“

For example one short impression about his novels:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4hwbHtyyEc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4hwbHtyyEc)

Michael O'Brien lives near Combermere, Ontario. He and his wife Sheila have six children and eight grandchildren.



1990's: „Christ in Gethsemane“

Born in Ottawa in 1948, Michael O'Brien is the author of twenty-eight books, notably the novel *Father Elijah* and eleven other novels, which have been published in fourteen languages and widely reviewed in both secular and religious media in North America and Europe.

Since 1970 he has also worked as a professional artist and has had more than 40 exhibits across North America. Since 1976 he has painted religious imagery exclusively, a field that ranges from liturgical commissions to visual reflections on the meaning of the human person. His paintings hang in churches, monasteries, universities, community collections and private collections throughout the world.

“In all my work I seek to contribute to the restoration of Christian culture. I try to express the holiness of existence and the dignity of the human person situated in an incarnational universe. Each visual image and each work of prose is an incarnation of a word, a statement of faith. At the same time, it asks the questions: What is most noble and eternal in man? Who is he? Why does he exist? And what is his eternal destiny?”

### Michael O'Brien answers to questions of Werner May

**Werner: You are writing and you are painting. This is extraordinary. Which came first? Are there roots in your family or in your childhood?**

Michael: My writing began only in the late 1970s. I began painting in 1970, shortly after my conversion to the Catholic faith. The inspiration for visual creativity arrived unexpectedly and in great force, first as an outpouring of drawing and then my first attempts at painting. My father had been a hobby painter, and perhaps this was a part of the inspiration - or a factor in my receptivity to the inspiration. Most of all, it was a gift from God, grace building on my human nature.

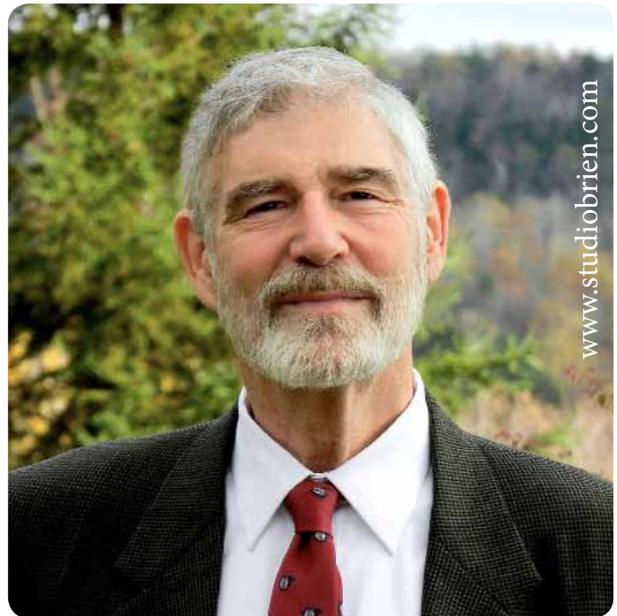
**Werner: You started at a young age as a painter. Have you changed your style? Did your subjects change? If so, why?**

Michael: The themes of my earliest work were from nature— forests, landscapes, water, etc., but also human scenes, faces especially. Then, from 1976 onward I painted overtly religious work almost exclusively, primarily Byzantine iconography. As my art became better known in Canada, church commissions came, and yet often these would be Western churches asking me to paint in a post-Renaissance style.

I saw the need for a regeneration of Western religious art, especially liturgical art, which had fallen into banality and sentimentality during the previous century and a half. I believed then, and still strongly believe, that Christian art will be revitalized by a rediscovery of what we lost in the catastrophic Schism between East and West. I tried to paint in a style that integrated the strengths of both. Though I do paint in several styles, more and more, the mainstream of my work became what one might call „neo-Byzantine expressionism.“ My subject matter continues to be explicitly Christian work, and at the same time there is an ongoing exploration of implicitly religious themes.

**Werner: How to you make a picture? From the initial idea to the finished product.**

Michael: Much of my work begins in prayer. Interiorly, I “see” a concept or a “logos”, in other words a meaning. Gradually this inner word grows into a form in my imagination that expresses the truth of the word. The form may be symbolic or literal, multidimensional in meaning, or simple. As I develop the theme on my painting board, drawing it, expanding it, erasing and refining, the clarity increases. Then comes colour. All the while I am praying for inner light, for what in Catholic theology we call “co-creation.” The graces of co-creation are God’s inspirations working together with the human talents of an artist, creating a new visual “word.”



**Werner: Is there a particularly noteworthy exhibition of your works?**

Michael: Of the forty or so exhibitions since early 1970’s, all have been noteworthy for various reasons, sometimes in large commercial galleries, sometimes in church and university galleries, and often in humbler places. After I made a decision to paint only Christian themes, public and commercial galleries would no longer exhibit me. I have lost count of the times I was told by galleries that they would be happy to give me a show, if only I would change my subject matter. I declined to do so.

For me, art is an act of love. Ambition and concerns about reputation are a horror to me, because these base instincts not only warp the creative intuition but they also deny what the essence of the vocation is about: To love. To love in truth. To love in truth and beauty.

One of the joys of my vocation is to make visible the invisible, to articulate interior realities, and to be a voice for the voiceless—in other words, to express what is within us all, yet is so often left unexpressed for lack of a “language”. Thus the response of those who see my work, and “hear” it deeply even as they “see” it, is very important to me. I never am tempted to think of my painting as a career. I’ve grown indifferent to reviews in newspapers and magazines (there have been many), though when I was a young man they gave me a burst of hope that Christi-

an arts might once again enter the mainstream of culture. Now, I believe that an authentic artist must not weigh the questions of “success” or “failure” in worldly terms. What matters is fidelity to the vocation of the artist—to create works that are beautiful and true—this is the real success.

sophy of art that has produced little in terms of real art. On the other hand, we have been blessed by a few extraordinary creative geniuses in this land. They set their own course and most of them were self-taught.

The genuine art of the country is found at the grassroots level, where the gift of making beau-



present day (2014):  
„Freedom“

**Werner: A look into the future: Did you have any special plans as a painter?**

Michael: To continue as I have been, hopefully always growing in skill and in sensitivity to inspirations. As long as my eyesight lasts. Until the last heartbeat.

**Werner: One last question. This edition of the magazine has the focus country Canada. Influenced this you as a person and as an artist that you live in this country?**

Michael: I have lived relatively isolated from the large cities where the fermentation and dynamism of most Canadian culture happens. Canada has suffered for many decades under an enormous State-funded culture, alongside commercialized culture restricted by a narrow and sterile aesthetics, a social revolutionary philo-

tiful things cannot be extinguished by artificial social/cultural constructs. Man is a maker by nature. He ponders his world and sees its mystery and its beauty and he yearns to express it. He experiences wonder, which is at the foundation of wisdom, philosophy, poetics.... indeed at the root of love.

The country of Canada (as distinct from the “nation” or “society”) has been an enormous gift to me. Outside of the cities, our vast spaces, the shocking beauty of our wilderness, the silence, saturate human consciousness and can lead us to inner attention, even to reverence for being itself—and for the Creator of all being. For me, the solitudes have been full of presence, the silence full of mystery “speaking” to us. We live on the edge of the infinite. And I think this has been a major influence on my consciousness.



Jesus and the children

## On Christian Psychology: An Interview with Russ Kosits by Werner May

**Werner May:** *You are involved in the work of the Society for Christian Psychology and now you are taking on the role of executive editor (academic/research) of Christian Psychology, the transdisciplinary journal. First, what does transdisciplinary mean and why do you think this is important for a Christian psychology?*

Russ Kosits: It's interesting you should ask - I recently had an opportunity to attend a small meeting on this very topic. This "consultation on transdisciplinary scholarship" in Berrien Springs, Michigan, featured a diverse group of fantastically talented scholars and leaders, all of whom chimed in on the topic. One of the big takeaways for me is that the word "transdisciplinary" is less important than the idea. What we're after is scholarship that is deeply rooted in Christian faith, Christian theology, and Christian philosophy, all shaped by the "norming norm," i.e., the Holy Scriptures - a scholarship where biblically-normed Christian theology and philosophy are, as one speaker put it, "in the driver's seat," and all of this nurtured by the church. These are the roots and the soil of Christian psychology--if we imagine Christian psychology as a tree, it will flow organically out of this soil and these roots.

One of the major convictions of the Christian psychology movement, however, is that Christians in psychology have lost touch with their own indigenous psychology. Or, perhaps, if they've not lost touch with their own psychology, they've compartmentalized it into a sort of Sunday morning psychology. Those of us who teach in psychology departments at Christian universities, for example, often end up teaching modern psychologies, then add a dash of "Christian perspective" to season the soup. That's not a very satisfying approach, in my experience. My students and colleagues often tell me - in various ways - that they sense this. As exciting



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as contemporary psychological science is - and it is tremendously exciting - many of us long for something more whole, more deeply integrated than just modern psychology baptized with Scripture. Eric Johnson's notion of "maximal integration" gets at this aspect of transdisciplinarity.

So again, the notion of transdisciplinarity recognizes that if psychological thought is to be distinctively Christian - and distinctive Christian scholarship is what the Christian psychology movement is all about - we need to be rooted in our own theology and philosophy. What I mean is this: theological and philosophical assumptions pervade all scholarship (although they are often implicit or invisible). We need to be aware of the assumptions that are in play as we psychologize, and we need to take pains to ensure that our theological and philosophical assump-

tions are the best and the most scriptural they can be; we need, in short, to learn to psychologize *as Christian believers*. And this is so hard to do because everything in our training and culture teaches us to compartmentalize.

I should say in addition that other disciplines and approaches, like history, also play a large role in a transdisciplinary approach.

In 2000, Robert Roberts articulated his vision of Christian psychology in *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views*. His idea was that we need to do careful and deep biblical exegesis and to “retrieve the Christian psychology of the past,” to ensure that our psychological concepts and theories are consistent with the Bible and with Christian tradition. All this, Roberts argued, was a kind of prophylactic, to ensure that our psychological thinking is intrinsically Christian rather than modern. Our attempts at integration, he argued, will be severely hamstrung if we’re out of touch with our own indigenous psychological thought.

But it’s important to realize that transdisciplinary scholarship is not merely theological or philosophical or historical—these are the foundation, the roots. An authentically Christian psychology is also going to be deeply conversant with the best psychological thought available. And of course most of that material will be written from a non-Christian vantage point. A huge part of Christian psychology is to draw upon the vast resources of contemporary and historical psychological thought.

***Werner May: In one publication, you’ve argued that it’s important to identify “which Christianity?” we’re talking about. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?***

Russ Kosits: Absolutely. This actually connects beautifully to this metaphor of the roots of Christian psychology. Christian psychology will be deeply rooted in Scripture and theology and Christian faith, supported by the institutional church. But it is obviously the case that there are multiple interpretations of Scripture, differing theologies, and different manifestati-

ons of the institutional church. The apostle Paul argued that there is only one faith and one baptism, and Jesus of course prayed for the unity of the church. So it’s important that we not be divisive. However, I think that one of the things that hamstrings Christian psychology is a kind of superficiality in our understanding of Scripture and theology. I believe that the quality and, importantly, the quantity, of Christian psychology will increase as people become better versed in their own traditions within the church, when they have a clear sense of how they understand the Bible, and when they have mastered the theological vocabulary of their own traditions. I have much more to learn about Christian psychology from a Roman Catholic who knows the Catholic tradition and can show me the psychological implications thereof, then perhaps from a brother or sister in my own tradition who is less well versed in our tradition. Indeed, it is only as people go deep in their own traditions that it becomes clear what we have in common and where we genuinely differ.

This actually connects to my previous comment about hidden theological and philosophical presuppositions. Often times, Christians who want to portray themselves as “mere” Christians obscure the fact that they actually have tradition-specific theological beliefs that profoundly shape their psychology. I personally think it’s best to be aware of those beliefs and presuppositions and put them on the table so that we can work with them, and be open to dialogue with other perspectives. If we portray ourselves as “mere Christians” and others disagree with us, well, that must be their problem, not ours.

Theological clarity will also help in the crucial task (identified by PJ Watson) of “operationalizing the Christian tradition,” i.e., in creating empirical measures of biblical and theological constructs, say, of grace or forgiveness or hope or whatever. If you’re fuzzy on what Scripture teaches about a particular construct, you’ll likely struggle to operationalize that construct. I’m glad to say that Christian Psychology has a tradition of engaging various Christian traditions, and we shall continue to do this as the Lord allows!

**Werner May: I have read that you have the hope that it is possible to do the work of the Christian psychology for mainstream audiences yet within an explicitly Christian perspective. Why do you believe this?**

Russ Kosits: I admit that the first time one encounters this idea it may sound outrageous. (I use the word “outrageous” quite deliberately, because it was precisely this idea that Marsden ably defended in his classic 1997 book *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, and in many ways I’m simply trying to apply Marsden’s ideas to psychology). There’s a lot that can be said about this, but we could start off by framing it as a diversity and fairness issue. Mainstream psychological science was originally conceived as a scientific and neutral endeavor. Since roughly the 1960s, however, there have been a number of movements within psychology that challenged this claim to worldview neutrality. Feminist psychology has shown that the discipline is not neutral, but had been rather sexist in some of its assumptions. LGBT psychologies have provided evidence that the discipline has been biased against homosexuals and other sexual minorities. Critical psychologies have demonstrated that the discipline has been Western and individualistic. Aboriginal studies have highlighted how Western assumptions of science have been experienced by aboriginals as *violent*, requiring them to eschew their own indigenous identities. There are other examples of this as well. They’ve all argued in one way or another that psychology has not been neutral vis-à-vis their most deeply held values and identities and that this situation has been unfair. They wanted to do scientific work in a way that’s consistent with their own worldviews. In a sense, what I’m arguing—and as many other Christians have argued and continue to argue—is that we need to have an equivalent playing space within mainstream psychology, where Christians also are free to “be themselves” and — as Alvin Plantinga puts it — bring all that they know and believe to their work as psychologists. This would be a vast improvement over the dualism, self-censorship, and compartmentalization which has had such a profound impact on Christian work in psychology.

I think there are people and pockets within the mainstream who would resonate with this. For example, last year at APA I gave a talk on Gordon Allport where I provided some new evidence for a tight connection between his supposedly secular and neutral psychological constructs and his Christian faith. At the end of the talk I asked the audience members this question: if Allport had wanted to “come out of the closet” and overtly explore the deep connection between his mainstream contribution and his Christian faith, could he have? Most in the audience instinctively agreed that he could not have. And at the end of the talk a former president of the Society for the History of Psychology suggested that we hold a symposium on “closeted” religious psychologists in the 20th century. Such a symposium—if we could show that mainstream psychologists who happened to be religious felt compelled to keep their worldview silent—could help to justify a more truly plural public square in psychology.

In August, I’ll be participating in a symposium entitled “toward a diversity of worldviews in psychological science” at the American Psychological Association meeting in Toronto – the very fact that this symposium was accepted also seems to be evidence of at least some openness to this possibility.

Another sign of hope is an upcoming special issue of the *Journal of Positive Psychology* - a mainstream journal - which will explore the possibility of a distinctively Christian positive psychology. Amazing!

Perhaps the most inspiring development - that gives me hope for structural change - has been the work of Jonathan Haidt, a very well-respected mainstream social psychologist who identifies himself as an atheist. In 2011 he gave an important address the annual meeting the Society of Personality and Social Psychology entitled, “The Bright Future of Post-Partisan Social Psychology”, in which he argued that liberal political values dominate the field of social psychology and that this creates a situation that is not only unfair to conservatives but also is to the detriment of social psychology itself. Politi-

cally conservative social psychologists are likely to see things and raise questions that liberals won't see or ask. I'd simply like to extend Haidt's argument and talk about the bright future of a religiously diverse psychological science. Or, to adapt the title of his 2014 follow-up article: religious diversity will improve psychological science.

All of these things give me hope that things are moving in a more truly plural direction.

***Werner May: And you want to add a missional context to Christian psychology? Please explain what you mean by that.***

Russ Kosits: If we were to have a more genuinely plural mainstream psychology, part of that pluralism would be the freedom to *persuade*. Persuasion is a fundamental part of all scholarship. We try to make the best case for our own perspectives, and Christian psychology attempts to be persuasively Christian. Now, clearly Christian psychology is for the good of the church and for the good of Christians. Indeed, much Christian psychology is really intended for Christian audiences only. But I think that a full-orbed Christian psychology will also aim to be for the good of the mainstream. If we could show that the Christian worldview resolves antinomies and contradictions that have long plagued the discipline, we may — as the apostle Paul puts it — win some. But there's a risk involved in such an exchange because Christians would need to be open to the persuasion attempts of other worldviews and inevitably those groups will also continue to win some to their cause.

Now we often hear that scholarship should not "proselytize," and to some extent that is fair. But to frame the issue in this way is misleading. It's to suggest that worldview-level persuasion attempts are out of play in mainstream scholarship. I think that's manifestly false. Naturalism, the "orthodoxy of the academy," is continually being propounded. So why can't Christians (and other ideological minorities in the discipline) join the game, so long as they do so respectfully, thoughtfully, and in a manner appropriate to the public square?

So how might we frame all of this as missional? Biblical theologians make a persuasive case that "kingdom" is the central concept of the New Testament, and the claim of the gospel is that Christ is the Lord of all, including - as Eric Johnson once famously put it - the Lord of psychology. The best "deeply engaged, strongly perspectival" (another term for transdisciplinary scholarship) Christian psychology will of necessity be persuasive, missional, making the case for Christ's lordship over psychology. In a truly plural public square Christians should be allowed to make that case. Non-Christians certainly are free to make the case for naturalist, or feminist, or LGBT, or aboriginal, or Buddhist perspectives, so, certainly Christian and other religious perspectives should also be allowed. And if Christians (and other people of faith) aren't allowed in appropriate contexts to be persuasive, to show why they believe their perspective to be compelling, then we don't have true freedom in the mainstream, we don't have a true pluralism or democratic context. We have repression instead.

***Werner May: It is not a provocation - I quote you - that "the Christian worldview... is actually the only worldview that can make ultimate sense of the science of psychology"?***

Russ Kosits: Yes, I have actually written that! And it's very much connected to my previous point. If Christianity really is "the true story of the whole world," (Goheen, Bartholemew, Wright) then certainly that would give us an explanatory advantage in psychology (since meta-narratives/stories/ultimate-level interpretations already form an integral part of psychological science). Imagine that! In our current intellectual context it seems that Christianity is perpetually on the defensive and Christians are reduced to defending their right to believe—even privately. We're told that traditional Christian belief has been disproved by the presence of evil, by cultural pluralism, by biological evolution, etc. And it is important to have provisional answers to such critiques. Yet Christians often feel as the apostle Peter felt when Jesus suggested the twelve apostles go elsewhere - where else can we turn? Naturalism seems implausible



Jesus walking on Water

to us. It's only when we take our stand inside and under the authority of Scripture that the world makes sense to us. It's only in Christ that things cohere for us. It's only, as Calvin says, as we wear "the spectacles of Scripture" that psychological data come into focus for us. I bet there are many folks in the mainstream who would like Christians to have the courage of their convictions and explain why they feel this way, and what difference it might make for psychology! Certainly as Christians we are called to be humble. But I wonder: in our current intellectual context, is epistemological humility balanced with epistemological courage or boldness? Do we actually think that Christianity is *true* true, or only true for us? If we think it is true, we should construct psychologies that openly reflect that.

I don't think I'm the only Christian saying something like this. I've been impressed that there are many thinkers who seem to push us in this direction, coming from different traditions within the church. Cornelius Van Til's transcendental argument was that the world does not make sense apart from the Christian worldview. Alister McGrath argues that the Christian worldview and the Holy Scriptures are a lens that make sense out of the findings of modern science. Alasdair MacIntyre, John Milbank, and PJ Watson argue that we ought to try to "out narrate" our intellectual competitors, and CS Lewis's well-known quote: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." That's the basic idea, and the basic case I believe we must make going forward if Christianity is going to have any credibility in psychology's future.

Here's another way of saying the same thing, that gets at the balancing act such a public expression of Christian faith requires: a few weeks ago, as the semester came to a conclusion, I wrote two seemingly contradictory phrases on the blackboard in my history of psychology class, to help us wrestle with the question of the role of our Christian faith in the public square: "One story among many" and "the true story of the whole world". I asked my students: which

phrase best characterizes Christianity's place in the 21st century? It was a bit of trick question. I think Christian psychology will do its job best when we can hold those two truths about Christianity together. We need to admit that, empirically, the Christian worldview is indeed one option among many in the marketplace of ideas. This takes humility: we don't demand special privileges or have any desire to compel belief in our worldview rather than theirs. But, simultaneously, we need to engage with the conviction that it is indeed the true story of the whole world. If we try to make that case - with all gentleness and respect - in a mainstream environment, that's courage.

In that same class I've asked my students "what would we do if the mainstream granted us the space to make the case for the Christian worldview? Or if a student or professor from nearby McMaster University came to visit us at Redeemer and asked, "what difference does the Christian worldview make to your understanding of psychology?" Would we have anything to say? I think the fact that we hesitate to answer that question is strong evidence that we need Christian Psychology to flourish.

***Werner May: You mentioned the importance of a historical perspective. Therefore my question: What role do you see history playing in Christian Psychology?***

Russ Kosits: Boy, I'm tempted to say a lot in response to this question! But I'll be brief: I see history as providing the narrative that will inspire and justify the Christian psychology and integration movements. In a way, Robert Robert's original vision for Christian psychology had a large role for history. The whole project of "retrieving the Christian psychology of the past" was a type of historical project. In his original chapter, he cited people like Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, Dostoyevsky, and important non-Christian influences on Christian psychology like Aristotle. As we mine the resources of historical psychological thought, he argued, Christian psychology will be helped. So important! But we need much more than this - we need an entirely new historical narrative to

animate and inspire maximal integration. This is because the textbook narratives that currently exist actually undermine our goals by inculcating and reinforcing the dualistic values of modernity which powerfully but unconsciously impel us to compartmentalize rather than integrate faith.

***Werner May: I greatly appreciate the importance you attach to psychology as an empirical science, which you also apply to a Christian psychology. As an empirical science, psychology makes use above all of quantitative methods such as experiments or questionnaires. But can measuring in numbers be appropriate to a Christian concept of man at all? Would a qualitative approach, such with e.g. the Grounded Theory approach (A. Strauss, B. Glaser), be more suitable for a Christian psychology?***

Russ Kosits: That's a great question and raises several important issues. Let me start by saying that I certainly think measuring in numbers is consistent with Christian psychology, as long as we know what the numbers mean. For example, one study that comes to mind showed an association between people's scores on a gratitude measure and their scores on a variety of sleep measures. So what does this tell us? Well, it's important to keep in mind that the statistical measure of association was looking at about 400 people all at once and described a general pattern of relationship that characterized the sample as a whole. It doesn't attempt to tell us about any individual person (in other words, you will very likely find people who are relatively grateful yet don't sleep well, and vice versa). Instead it gives us a rule of thumb: generally speaking, more gratitude is associated with better sleep. Furthermore, in that study only about 10% of the variability of scores on one of the measures of sleep could be statistically explained by gratitude, which means that sleep quality is complex, and that gratitude is likely only one of many factors associated with it (indeed, the authors provided evidence that gratitude's influence on sleep is mediated by another variable - pre-sleep thoughts). But certainly information like this is useful for Christian Psychology, don't you think? The science

validates the Christian emphasis on gratitude, reveals some connections that we may not have known before, and suggests some obvious and simple real-world applications. Still, it is quite possible that people might misinterpret quantitative analysis to mean that we are "reducing people to numbers," or something like that. So I think your question is a good reminder that Christian psychology needs to be clear about the limits of a scientific approach in psychology.

And that actually is the flipside of the issue, because the discipline of psychology has not always done a good job of this. In emphasizing quantitative approaches to the exclusion of other valid approaches, the discipline has - at times - put the methodological cart before the psychological horse, implying that if it cannot be measured it isn't psychological. That implication is unfortunate, and not a little silly. It's silly because we intuitively understand this can't be true. It's unfortunate because, as G.K. Beale has reminded us, we are shaped profoundly by what we worship. If we insist that empirical methods are the only pathway to psychological truth - in other words, if we commit a sort of "methodology," we will inevitably end up with a very flat view of human nature. You know the saying - if the only tool you have is a hammer the whole world looks like a nail. Well, if the only tool you have is experimentation or regression analysis, human beings begin to look like nothing but a complex assemblage of "variables."

But there are all kinds of encouraging movements within psychology that mitigate against this danger. First, the discipline has for decades (at least) attempted to be clear about the limits of and proper interpretation of quantitative analysis and is currently in the midst of significant methodological self-reflection and self-improvement. Even more than that, qualitative work - which has always played a role in mainstream psychology (e.g., Anselm Strauss, whom you mention, was apparently an important mentor of Lawrence Kohlberg) - has made significant advances as well, with the recent launch of a brand-new APA journal *Qualitative Psychology* and the expansion of APA Division 5 (Evaluation, Measurement, and Statistics) to

include a section dedicated to qualitative methods (the new Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology).

One more point should be made, I think: A weakness of the Christian psychology movement in its early years was a perceived ambivalence toward empirical methods. I've mentioned Robert Roberts classic and seminal chapter on Christian psychology in the first edition of *Psychology and Christianity*, where he argued that we need to retrieve the psychological thought of the Scriptures and of Christian tradition. As inspiring and exciting as that chapter still is, it was hard to sell such an approach thus stated to existing psychology departments in Christian colleges and universities because all of our departments were and are committed to psychological science. Although he didn't intend it, the chapter may have been interpreted to mean that Christian psychology wants to move beyond mainstream psychological science and focus instead on, say, the Bible and St. Augustine. Now it is certainly true that psychology departments at Christian colleges and universities need the Bible and St. Augustine, but we needed to be careful not to give the impression that it's an either/or proposition.

Thankfully, Christian psychology's commitment to empirical methods—and to at least some parts of psychological science—is now well-established. We've published empirical work in *Christian Psychology*, and the second edition of *Psychology and Christianity* included psychological scientist PJ Watson as Roberts co-author, where they argue for expanded use of empirical methods. But even in that chapter, the sense is that empirical methods are useful to Christian psychology only insofar as they address religion and morality. In the future, we need to do a better job of showing how all of psychological science fits into a Christian psychology framework.

So I guess this is the bottom line for me: the Christian worldview and anthropology is big enough to accommodate quantitative methods, qualitative methods, exegetical methods, historical methods, literary approaches, and more.

The complexity and richness of human experience cannot be captured by any one method. So I think Christian psychology should be methodologically plural, and should avoid the quest for the One True Method. At the same time, we need to be fully engaged with psychological science.

***Werner May: You've talked about the soil and roots of the tree of Christian psychology. How do you understand the rest of the tree?***

Russ Kosits: This is another question where I'd be tempted to go on and on! But I do think it's a nice way to tie some of these ideas together, so let me try to be brief. The tree metaphor is inspired by the thought of Abraham Kuyper (and a bit by Craig Bartholomew, as well). Kuyper also likened scholarship to a tree, and imagined that the trunk of that tree has to do with those areas of inquiry where worldview differences do not get in the way of collaboration, i.e., those domains of science tied to measurable and replicable observations. But when we move beyond measurement and replication and begin to provide ultimate-level interpretations or narrations of these observations, then we have *branches* of science. It's a pretty elegant model and, I think, might be a good way to briefly describe the entirety and inclusiveness of Christian psychology. We've already described the roots—the psychology of the Scriptures and of Christian tradition, nourished by the soil of faith and the church. We've already discussed Christian psychology's commitment to psychological science, i.e., to the trunk of the tree. And I've also been repeatedly talking about a distinctively Christian narrative or ultimate-level interpretation and integration of the best psychological thought, i.e., the Christian branch of psychological science.

This maps fairly well on to the way Christian psychology was described in 2010 in *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views* by Roberts and Watson. There they described the psychology of the Scriptures and of Christian tradition as “step one.” That's the “roots.” “Step two,” as they described it, created a (limited) space for psychological science (which I would hope to expand).

That's the trunk. And I'm essentially suggesting that Christian psychology recognize that there is a "step three" which has for whatever reason not yet been included in the canonical statements, i.e., Eric Johnson's notion of "maximal integration" or what I've called "deeply engaged, strongly perspectival" research. That would be the distinctively Christian branch of psychological science and applied psychology.

I think this vision of Christian psychology would be inclusive, incorporating the best of psychological science and applied psychology, and, with appropriate qualifications, all "views" of the relationship between psychology & Christianity. From my vantage point, our journal publishes all three parts of the tree, though it would be unwise to publish empirical work that could just as easily appear in mainstream journals.

There are some conceptual issues that need to be clarified here - which I'm sure that other Christian psychology nerds will recognize - but, again, I don't want to want to bore readers with the details!

***Werner May: Thank you very much, Russ. My compliment about your seriousness, creativity and courage.***

Russ Kosits: Thank you, Werner. I'm so thankful for the opportunity to share these ideas with you and wish you continued blessings on the good work you do!



Christmas at Sea

Shannon Wolf (USA)

## Comment on “On Christian Psychology: An Interview with Russ Kosits”

It is not uncommon for Christian clinicians to not fully grasp the foundational tenets of Christian psychology. After all, it appears to be a fairly new addition to the world of mental health and often not included in the regular course work of graduate schools. For this reason I tend to take note when someone presents Christian psychology in a clear and precise manner. This is exactly what happened in Werner May’s interview of Russ Kosits. In this interview, Kosits expertly articulated the finer points of Christian Psychology.

In describing the concept of a transdisciplinary approach to scholarship, Kosits contends that for the Christian professional, Scripture should guide all philosophical discussions and understandings of human nature. He calls for a new mindset that would make this approach the norm as opposed to the notion that Christian psychology means sprinkling a little Christianity on top of secular approaches to scholarship. Ultimately, he is arguing for an end to the compartmentalization of our faith and our science. While the point is well made and accurate, the practice will not be easily achieved. Not only does higher education teach therapists their craft, it also teaches the therapist how to think. Hence, Christian professionals are taught to think in terms of compartmentalization and indeed are told that this practice is the ethical approach to good scholarship. That Kosits challenges that notion as he prompts the reader to explore the necessary steps in creating a meaningful Christian psychology will likely cause some readers to experience some discomfort. Hopefully, his argument will lead to

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a shift in professional assumptions that will in turn lead to a transformation in our approach to scholarship.

In asking if Christian therapists truly believe that God is right and that the Christian worldview is the only view that makes sense of the world around us, Kosits calls for the Christian community to humbly engage society and confront worldview bias. He exposes and then challenges the world’s assumption that Christians should not bring their worldview into the marketplace, science, or the practice of mental health. Again, a major hurdle in this endeavor is overcoming the acceptance of this bias by Christian professionals. It seems that Christian psychology is battling for the minds of the Christian therapist – a daunting task, indeed.

Kosits thoughtfully lays out his argument that our faith in Christ is foundational to who we are as individuals and as professionals. Because of this, he calls for an ever-deepening personal faith and understanding of our various Christian traditions so that we can inform one another, sharpen our science, and engage our community. In truth, the ill-equipped professional only confirms the world’s notion that the Christian worldview has no place in mental health community.

Article by Shannon Wolf see <http://www.em-capp.ignis.de/5/#/88>

**Paul C. Vitz**

## **Comment on “On Christian Psychology: An Interview with Russ Kosits”**

Three Cheers for Russ Kosits and his understanding of a Christian Psychology. I have some comments and a proposed friendly enlargement by including some of the major Catholic contributions to integration psychology, but I have, no real criticisms at all. Over and over as I read his paragraphs, I found myself saying “yes, yes” and “hear, hear”.

To begin my comments, I think secular psychology has already taken a major turn toward a serious openness to a Christian world view –but without really understanding that it has done so.

The move, well noted by Kosits and many others, to study the virtues and human flourishing by major psychologists, both secular and Christian, is a move away from the old naturalism. This older understanding of science focused only on the past and its assumed and measureable causes in the present. It was intrinsically only about determinism. By moving to study the virtues, psychology has moved to study our choices and our purposes. In short, psychology has moved from determinism to teleology. In doing so, psychological science has expanded the modern understanding of science so as to include final cause as a cause- to readmit Aristotle, if you will. With this move, I believe psychology will inevitably discover the need for an explicit ethical and moral framework to truly address the nature of flourishing. Also, I am convinced this new trajectory will lead psychology to rediscover the need to accept the importance of the transcendent. These developments, and there are already early signs of them, should they reach fruition, will allow ample room for a Christian psychology.

I would also like to suggest that the work by Catholics on the integration of psychology and the

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Articles by Paul you can see here:

<http://www.emcapp.ignis.de/5/#/134>

<http://www.emcapp.ignis.de/5/#/150>

<http://www.emcapp.ignis.de/5/#/160>



faith be included. Something that Kosits explicitly notes as relevant to the integration task.

Here the work of John Paul II on the “Theology of the Body” and the writings of other Catholics on what has been termed “Catholic Anthropology” can be seen as contributions to the integration challenge.

In this context we at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences (IPS) have been actively developing an explicit and detailed Catholic/Christian model of the person with applications to psychology and psychotherapy. The Model is a group effort of our faculty over a period of more than ten years. Early versions and components of this IPS Model have been published and the basic theological, philosophical and psychological rationale is now available from IPS. In about a year we plan to have the whole thing available on line, free of charge. The IPS Model is an example of what Kosits calls “transdisciplinary” since the model is rooted in theology and philosophy as well as psychology. It is also, I believe, an example of “maximal integration” as proposed by Eric Johnson.

Very, very briefly, the IPS Model can be summarized as follows: The person has ten foundatio-

nal characteristics. The first three are narrative and constitute an overarching framework. They are: The person is created by God in His image; the person is fallen through sin, and the person is redeemed through Jesus Christ. From this first set of assumptions comes the basic dignity and worth of every human being. This view is in contrast to those psychologists who assume we are the result of materialist evolution where we are here only due to chance and survival - hardly a basis for our dignity and worth.

Although the Christian content of this narrative has no equivalent in today's psychology, many secular theories of the person have a similar narrative structure. For example, the psychology of Carl Rogers assumes that persons have an origin that is all good; that we have many problems, mostly inhibitions due to parents, family, religion, society; and the solution or answer is self-actualization. Jung proposed individuation and self-realization as the answer to life's problems. Recently McAdams has proposed "redemptive life stories" and Seligman has proposed that flourishing through developing the virtues should be the goal of life. Many other psychologies have a general theory of our origin, the nature of our problems, and an idealized resolution to our problem. With such a basic Christian narrative perhaps we can actually "out narrate" our intellectual competitors as Kosits clearly advocates.

The next five basic characteristics in the IPS Model are natural properties of the person all of which have considerable psychological support. These five are: the person has reason (intelligence); has a will that is in significant part free; the person is significantly created by and for inter-

personal relationships; has a body which is an intrinsic part of being a person; the person is an integrated whole of these properties.

The last two major characteristics are that the person is called to the vocations of holiness, -to a state in life, such as marriage or the consecrated life, and to some kind of work contributing to society.

Finally the tenth characteristic is that persons are called to respond to their particular vocations through the development of the virtues.

All of these characteristics of the IPS Model of the person are given extensive theological, philosophical and psychological support. In addition, the implications of the Model for different kinds of psychotherapy, e.g. cognitive/behavioral therapy, group therapy, and well such things as case conceptualization, training of psychotherapists are systematically described. The IPS Model exhibits most of the things that Kosits emphasizes that a Christian psychology should have. However, it does miss some of his points. Specifically, the IPS Model has few references to the contributions of the early Church fathers. We have room for improvement there. Although supporting Scripture references are quite frequent the Model could probably use some more explicit examples of what is often called Biblical psychology. Here at IPS we welcome the suggestions, challenges and criticisms of Kosits and his Protestant colleagues. In spite of our somewhat different approaches to Christian psychology, I think we can look forward to baptizing psychology and furthering a true psychological understanding of the person.

**E. Janet Warren**

## **Relational Theology and Relational Therapy**

There is now a large body of literature related to the integration of psychology and Christian theology. However, much of it has focused on generalities, noting commonalities, arguing that they can be integrated, and developing models for doing so (e.g. Johnson, 2010). There has been some attention to specific topics, such as sin (McMinn, 2008) and forgiveness (Worthington, 2009), and approaches based on specific theologies (e.g. Holeman, 2012, who uses a Wesleyan framework), but I believe there is room for further exploration of how foundational concepts in theology may inform psychology. As is often remarked, psychology has had far more influence on Christianity than the converse. In addition, many therapists compartmentalize their faith and their practice, a result perhaps of unawareness, lack of a model, or incompatibilities between their theologies and their therapies. Highlighting theologies which are well-suited to psychotherapy may assist with integration and advance the growing field of Christian psychology.

One such domain is relational theology, which not surprisingly, is compatible with relational therapy. (It is perhaps better to refer to theologies and therapies, given the diversity of views, but I will use the singular for simplicity.) Relational theology emphasizes God's interaction with the world as loving, interdependent, flexible, and dynamic. Relational therapy notes the importance of healthy relationships for emotional well-being and views healing as occurring in the context of the psychotherapeutic relationship. In this paper I first discuss the importance of relationship to both theology and psychology, including the implications of relationship in the imago Dei and recent neurophysiology research on mirror neurons. Next I offer overviews of relational theology and relational therapy, including some Christian therapies. I conclude that a relational view of God meshes well with and can inform psychotherapy, and can increase consistency between theory and praxis.

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### **The Centrality of Relationship in Theology and Psychology**

Christianity is at core about relationship, particularly between God and his creatures. Psychotherapy is also at core about relationships: relationship between counselor and client, and relationships between client and others. The difficulties we have with relationships at all levels are perhaps reflections of our broken world and our state of alienation from our Creator. Both theologians and psychologists have noted that our horizontal relationships (with others) are related to our vertical relationship (with God). It could be argued that the reason God created humans was to be in relationship with him. Throughout history God is present with his people; first with Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:8), then with Israel, his covenantal people (Exod. 20:2-3), and ultimately with all humanity through Jesus Christ. Immanuel means "God with us" (Matt. 1:22-23). God continues to be present with us through his Spirit (John 14:23) and is always active in the universe, "not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). The parables of Jesus similarly speak of God's delight over one lost sheep, lost coin or returned prodigal. The majority of biblical metaphors for God are explicitly relational: husband-wife (e.g. Hosea), parent-child (Matt. 23:37, Luke 18:16,17), teacher-student (Matt. 23:8,10). Jesus



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teaches his disciples that the most important commandments to follow are the two that require relationships of love, first with God, then with others (Matt. 22:36-40).

Furthermore, humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). The *imago Dei*, despite limited biblical attention, is an important topic in theology. Four approaches can be described: structural—we resemble God with respect to our rationality and morality, functional—we image God through our stewardship over creation, relational—we have a special relationship with God, particularly as we focus on Christ, and dynamic—the divine image is a goal of humanity (e.g., Grenz, 2000, pp. 168–73; Grenz 2001, pp. 141–82; Cortez, 2010, pp. 14–40). The relational view has come to prominence in contemporary thought, especially with the new emphasis on the trinity as social and relational. Theologian Daniel Migliore (1991, p. 122), for example, critiques other views in favor of a relational one: “Human beings are created for life in relationships that mirror or correspond to God’s own life in relationship.”

The relational view of the *imago Dei* is sometimes viewed in combination with the functional or dynamic views. Being made in God’s image also implies responsibility as humans are commanded to build community and care for creation (Gen. 1:28). As Old Testament scholar Terrence Fretheim (2005, p. 49) notes, we are “created in the image of God...[but also] to be the image of God.” Imaging God is active not passive. Similarly, relational and dynamic views are associated. Theologian Paul Sponheim (2006, p. 53) points out that image refers not to a human “property” but to a relationship that has directionality and teleology: “The image calls us ahead, into life.” Through Christ and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, humans are called to move towards perfecting our ability to image God as we were originally created to do. In philosophy and psychology there has been a move from viewing the self as primarily rational to viewing it as relational (e.g., Grenz, 2001, pp. 9–14, pp. 58–97). Recent neurophysiological research supports the idea that we are created as relational beings. In their original experiments involving primates, Rizzolatti et al (1996) and

Gallese et al (1996) discovered that neurons which fired when the animal performed a certain task also became active when the animal merely observed the experimenter doing the same thing. They aptly named these mirror neurons. Further study enabled them to hypothesize that the function of these neurons is to understand the meaning of “actions performed by others” (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia, 2008, p. 97). Studies in humans using positron emission tomography and functional magnetic resonance imaging have confirmed the presence of mirror neurons in humans (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia, 2008, pp. 115–23). Human mirror neurons appear to have a wider range of function than in monkeys and have roles in imitation, language, and learning (pp. 139–71) as well as empathy and emotional sharing (pp. 185–93), although the authors caution that there are many other factors involved in these complex human capacities. Most counselors have noted how they are affected by the emotions of others. In fact, often unaware, we find ourselves crossing our legs when our client does so. This is mirror neurons at work. Sponheim (2006, p. 145), when discussing the neurosciences, notes that creation itself is inherently relational. All cells as well as subatomic particles are interconnected. It appears humans are hardwired for relationship and empathy.

Finally, although psychotherapy has always recognized the importance of the therapeutic relationship, it is being emphasized in recent discussions. Certain types of therapy are rooted in relationship (e.g., Gestalt, person-centered), but it is increasingly being noted that the relationship between therapist and client is critical for successful therapy, regardless of style. There is little evidence supporting the superiority of any therapeutic technique over another (Wampold et al, 1997), instead, the quality of the relationship is the catalyst for change (e.g., Corey, 2001, pp. 15–18).

From a Christian perspective, the psychotherapeutic relationship (employed with wisdom and integrity) can be viewed as a model for the relationship between God and his people. As Mark McMinn (1996, p. 43) notes, “when the counseling relationship works well, it is because



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it mimics the redemptive relationship Christians experience with God through Jesus Christ.” Thus the therapeutic relationship can be seen as a prototype for other healthy relationships. The ability to perform redemptive counseling is related more closely to the counselor’s theological and spiritual insight, than to any specific technique (McMinn, 1996, p. 242). Yet, as mentioned, many therapists inadequately integrate theological beliefs and therapeutic practice. Bringing a biblical/theological perspective on relationship to the forefront can benefit psychotherapy.

### **Relational Theology**

Relational theology is a new discipline, or perhaps a reworking of some old concepts, which emphasizes relational aspects of God. Traditional theology, which is largely influenced by Greek philosophy, has focused on God’s immutability, impassability, and omnipotence. Divine transcendence and power have been favored over immanence and love. In addition, the nature of the Trinity has been viewed, much like the *imago Dei*, in a structural rather than a relational sense, and there has been a relative neglect of the third person of the Trinity. Relational theology seeks to offer a corrective and an alternative to classic conceptions of God.

The turn to relationship in theology can be traced to the recovery of Trinitarian theology, especially the relational nature of the divine person(s), and is associated with well-known theologians such as Barth, Rahner, Moltmann, and Pannenberg (e.g., Grenz, 2001, pp. 23–57; Vanhoozer, 2010, pp. 105–24). The triune God is described as existing in community in an interdependent relationship of love and mutuality, sometimes poetically named a divine dance. Relational theology also has roots in Wesleyan, Pentecostal, and feminist theologies (e.g., Brint, Oord & Winslow, 2012; Isherwood & Bellchambers, 2012). This view emphasizes divine love, intimacy, responsiveness, flexibility, self-limitation, and human responsibility.

Love, an implicitly relational term, characterizes who God is and how he relates to his creation. God engages his world not with mastery and control, but dynamically, being sensitive

and responsive to his creatures. A relational view of God notes that God expresses regret (Gen. 6:6, 1 Sam. 15:10,35), surprise (Isa. 5:2-4, Jer. 3:6,7), and frustration (Exod. 4:10-15, Ezek. 22:30-31). God suffers “because of his people” (Jer. 2:5), “with his people” (Amos 5:1,2), and “for his people” (Isa. 42:14) (Pinnock, 2001, p. 56,7). The Father grieves when his children turn away and speaks tender words of reconciliation: “I will betroth you in...love and compassion...in faithfulness.” (Hos. 2:19, 20). God is clearly affected by those he is in relationship with, which explains the title of Canadian theologian Clark Pinnock’s book, *Most Moved Mover* (2001).

Relational theology also emphasizes divine flexibility. This is illustrated by the story of the potter and the clay. Just as the potter had to revise his plans when the clay was spoiled, so the Lord says, “can I not do with you...just as this potter has done?” (Jer. 18:6). God is intimately involved with and creatively responsive to his creatures. Relational theologians often refer to divine kenosis (following Phil. 2:6–11). Because God desires freely chosen relationships, He limits himself. Divine sovereignty is demonstrated not through domination, but through sharing power (Pinnock, 2001, p. 93).

Out of love and generosity, God chooses to create a world of interrelated creatures and freely chooses to enter into relationship with them. Fretheim (2005, p. 270) stresses the interdependent nature of this relationship: although “all creatures are deeply dependent upon God for their existence and continuing life...God has freely chosen to establish an interdependent relationship with the creation...with overlapping spheres of responsibility.” Similarly, Migliore (1991, p. 94) compares God’s relationship with the world with that of an artist—creative, free, playful but respecting the integrity of his creation. Late Canadian theologian Stanley Grenz (2000, p. 243) believes “the establishment of community as the overarching purpose of God forms the integrative motif or ordering principle for systematic theology.”

However, for love to be meaningful, there must exist the possibility of non-love, or rejection of

a relationship with God. When the first humans disobey, all relationships are disrupted: with God, each other, and within themselves. But God desires loving intimacy with his people, so He provides a way to reconcile and repair those relationships, through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. God is always faithful to his relationships but humans have responsibility too. Relational theology emphasizes human agency and the ability to resist the divine will. In this respect, it also offers a theology of suffering and evil (e.g., Pinnock, 2001, pp. 131–34, 176–7). Pain is present partly because God values freedom and does not coerce people, even when they choose evil.

Some evangelical Christians may be concerned by the fact that many scholars who endorse relational theology are also liberal and/or process theologians. However, it is important to recognize that there is much diversity—many evangelical theologians favor a relational view of God. Other criticisms include a concern that overemphasizing love may lead to a denial of divine righteousness and judgment. I agree that sometimes correctives may go a little too far, but I believe love and judgment, like many other biblical concepts, can be held in tension with one another. The emphasis may vary according to circumstances, but I suggest that love should always be a dominant concept in psychotherapy.

### **Relational Therapy**

Relational therapy, although rooted in psychodynamic, humanist, feminist, and attachment theories, has developed in its own right over the last 20 years. It is a general therapy applicable to many types of problems and follows the assumption that since wounding occurs in relationship healing needs to occur in the context of a positive psychotherapeutic relationship. “This relationship is a mutual risk, a joint commitment, an interactive process, a shared journey” (DeYoung, 2003, p. 42). It also offers a way to integrate various types of therapies, and can include the triadic relationship between client, therapist, and model (Faris & van Ooijen, 2012). Therapists note that if improvement is attained in one area, it impacts other areas; e.g. relationships improve when thinking is less rigid (Faris & van Ooijen, 2012, pp. 5–23). The

Toronto Institute for Relational Therapy (n. d.) lists the following principles on which relational psychotherapy is based:

1. Emotional well-being depends on having satisfying mutual relationships with others.
2. Emotional distress is often rooted in patterns of relationship experience, past and present, which have the power to demean and deaden the self.
3. The relational therapist tries to understand the client’s unique self-experience in its social/relational context and to respond with empathy and genuine presence.
4. Together, client and therapist create a new in-depth relationship which is supportive, strengthening and enlivening for the client.
5. Within this secure relationship, the client can safely re-experience, and then find freedom from, the powerful effects of destructive relationships, past and present.

Relational therapy has been used by Christian counselors. James Olthuis (1994) develops a relational psychotherapeutic model based on the concept of Immanuel, God-with-us. He believes “being-with” is at the heart of psychotherapy and uses the biblical idea of covenanting as a metaphor for healing relationships, noting that counseling can assist people in reconnecting to God with respect to all aspects of self and self in community. More recently, McMinn and Campbell (2007) have proposed a relationally-based integrative psychotherapy, which can assimilate different types of psychotherapy and offer a biblically-based worldview from which to practice therapy. They note that three theories of the imago Dei (functional, structural, and relational) correspond respectively to three domains of psychotherapy (adaptive behavior or symptom-focused, cognitive behavior (CBT) or schema-focused, and relationship-focused). A skilled therapist travels between all three domains. For example, CBT (structural domain) is done in the context of a healing relationship (relational domain). The domains are inter-related: a client who is irrational is likely to suffer difficulties in interpersonal relationships; conversely someone who is struggling with their marriage may exhibit irrational behavior at work. McMinn and Campbell emphasize the



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relational domain, noting that it underpins and encompasses the other views. “Therapy works because it allows some part of the imago Dei to be reclaimed and reawakened in therapy” (p. 121). When people make choices towards change, they improve from a psychological perspective (behavior change) and a theological perspective (exercising God-given responsibility). Although McMinn and Campbell do not specifically engage relational theology, they emphasize that Christianity is “a relationally based faith” in which people “experience a real relationship with God through Jesus Christ” (pp. 344–5) and are called to be Christ-like in relating to each other with grace, truth, and love.

Pamela Cooper-White (2007) also suggests a relationally-based psychotherapy from a psychoanalytical perspective. The underlying Christian assumption is that humans are intrinsically relational, loving, and loved (pp. 38–66). She engages relational theology specifically, drawing on the work of feminist theologians such as Catherine LaCugna. Cooper-White argues for a relational understanding of God and persons as a theoretical framework and, in the second part of her book, describes the therapeutic process through some case examples. She associates empathy with relationality and suggests kenosis as part of the therapeutic attitude, for example; however, in my opinion, the two parts do not mesh well. Because of the centrality of relationship to both theology and psychology described above, integration may seem natural, but perhaps needs to be done with more intentionality.

### **Theology informing Therapy**

It should be apparent that there are many similarities between relational theology and relational therapy: both recognize that relationships require risk, both focus on love as a choice, both emphasize the need to heal broken relationships, both value human autonomy and responsibility, both view relationships as dynamic and flexible, and both emphasize process over content. Just as God is always present and faithful to his people, good counselors are present and authentic to their clients. This is likely reflective of the fact that we are created, in the image of God, as relational beings, even though

the image is marred by sin. Psychology, as a science, observes divine creation, which includes human beings. Any counselor can observe the nature of God’s world whether they accept his sovereignty or not.

However, understanding the theology underlying the observations is especially relevant to Christian therapists and clients. Whether they acknowledge it or not, all counselors espouse a theology. As McMinn (1996, p. 16) rightly points out, “beneath every technique is a counseling theory, and beneath every theory is a worldview.” Unfortunately, many people are unaware of their theology, which can lead to a disparity between belief and action. Agneta Schreurs (2002) believes that therapists need an awareness of their own theologies, particularly because counselees also come with pre-existent theologies. Often a patient’s theology may obstruct therapeutic progress. People in therapy ask a multitude of questions:

*What is the nature of a relationship with God? Subservience? Friendship? Judging and punishing? Educational? Magical? Does this transcendent Being want me to do some specific things, or to live according to certain principles? May I expect some special favours or powers in return? And what about this unique real-life situation I am in right now, with all its nuances and ambiguities?* (p. 219)

Schreurs discusses various views on our relationship with God and how they may help or hinder therapy. She makes a good point: responsible counselors need to be aware not only of their own beliefs but also of the beliefs held by their clients.

The biblical/theological idea of relationships being fundamental to humanity has been well discussed and underlies the commonalities between theology and therapy as well as some specific Christian psychologies. However, a relational theology view of God can inform more than the therapeutic relationship. First, an emphasis on divine love over judgment can guide the process of therapy. There are often discussions in Christian psychology about the tensions between internal (e.g., sin) and external (e.g., sickness) attributions (e.g., McMinn, 1996, p. 130–

35). The former is seen to be more biblical with a focus on repentance, submission, and humility. The latter is characteristic of most secular psychologies with an emphasis on self-esteem and empowerment. A relational model can bridge the gap between “secular” and “Christian” approaches. Relational theology emphasizes God’s love and desire for healthy relationships, thus empowerment would occur through an acceptance of God’s love. God’s desire for loving relationship with his people involves invitation, not coercion, and sharing of power. He is viewed more as a loving parent than an angry judge who will condemn the sinner. When people do turn away from God, He is saddened but always longs to welcome them back.

However, it is important to be reminded of the critiques of relational theology. Although love is emphasized over judgment, even secular counselors recognize that gentle confrontation is often needed; “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). There are occasions when repentance is helpful in furthering the divine-human relationship. This model also reflects the experience of most counselors, who instinctively emphasize divine love over judgment. In my own work in guiding patients through prayer healing, when God speaks to people, they never experience him as angry or judgmental. Instead they receive gentle nudges and encouragement. For example, a patient of mine with a severe abuse history had an insight during prayer that it is more sinful to hate herself than to hate others.

Second, relational theology’s emphasis on an intimate God-human relationship can guide Christian counseling. This is important not only with respect to the therapist-client relationship modeling the divine-human one, but also with respect to healing of wounding from previous relationships. For example, someone who has experienced abuse at the hands of her father may have difficulty in relating to God as Father. Given divine flexibility, we can instead work on a relationship with Jesus as friend. Therapists may use many techniques, as diverse as CBT or spiritual disciplines, in nurturing the spiritual relationships of clients. In therapy there is usually more of a focus on emotional issues rather than intellectual ones. Relational theolo-

gy which offers consistency between our intellectual understanding of God (loving, compassionate, and flexible) and our emotional experience of him can assist counselors in this regard by offering a framework in which to counsel.

Third, relational theology’s emphasis on divine self-limitation and respect for human freedom can assist clients with understanding and dealing with suffering. Many Christians who are enduring hardships suffer a second crisis in that they wonder “why is God doing this to me?” Relational theology explains suffering partly as a result of the free choice of others who may turn away from God and thus inflict harm on others. God does not necessarily cause the grief, but he grieves with us and is present to provide comfort. In my experience, this understanding can be very liberating for people. And, in my opinion, this idea fits much better with a compassionate Christian counseling approach than does a theology of divine control and determinism.

Fourth, relational theology can guide decision making. Because God is flexible and responsive to our actions, He does not necessarily have “one” specific plan for our lives (this is not a biblical idea, but is common in popular piety), but works with us in our decision making, and walks with us in our lives. Although we are dependent on God, we are also responsible for our part in the relationship. And when we mess up, we can trust that the divine potter will mold us anew.

Finally, a theological emphasis on human responsibility is likely to be helpful in therapy. Although relationship is primary, the content of therapy almost always involves choice. Regardless of the technique used, clients have responsibility for showing up in the first place. In guiding people in their relationships with God and with others, we can point out the choices they have with respect to thoughts and actions. We can stress God’s desire for loving relationships with us, but that ultimately the choice is ours.

Overall, I believe that a relational view of God has many advantages over the traditional view and that these are especially applicable to psy-

chotherapy. Emphasizing the loving, respectful, and flexible nature of God may allow for better integration of theology and psychology and better compatibility between theory and practice. Many theologians have also noted the practical applicability of relational theology. Pinnock (2001, p. 153–78), for example, notes that relational theology appears to have the best existential and experiential fit. Our experience of freedom and the friendship of God fit best with a relational view of God. We can seek divine guidance in actual situations knowing that God is intimately involved in our daily lives. I also suggest that theologians can perhaps refine their theology in dialogue with counselors regarding how people experience both the divine-human relationship and the therapeutic relationship.

### Conclusions

We live our lives in relationship, whether in counseling or not. Neurophysiology suggests we are hardwired for relationship. Although we live in a fallen world, there is still evidence of our being made in God's image as relational beings. A theology which emphasizes relationship is therefore most helpful. Relational theology conceives of God as lovingly and intimately involved with his creation. He is faithful and flexible, desiring to persuade rather than coerce. And he chooses to share his power with us in order that we may exercise responsibility in our choices and our relationships. A relational model allows for more consistency both in how our theology fits with experience and in how we apply our theology. Our horizontal relationships reflect our vertical ones and vice versa. When relationality is viewed as central, orthodoxy and orthopraxis draw closer.

Admittedly, God's relationship with the world can never be fully explained. However, as co-agents with God, we are called to both understand (theology) and heal (psychology) this world and the relationships within and without it. We are called to draw all into a loving relationship with their Creator and to nurture people in their intimacy with God.

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## Comment on “Relational Theology and Relational Therapy”

In the psychotherapeutic world we can observe a great movement towards integration, involving the meaning of relationship and including spirituality into therapeutic practice. In this context, Janet Warren’s idea of meeting relational theology and relational therapy seems to be very useful and “on time”. I would like to present some examples of research on psychotherapy which show where it is leading. All they are very close to and supportive of Janet Warren’s ideas.

Integrative psychotherapy develops in many countries in the world. Psychotherapy integration has developed into a mature, empirically supported, and international movement. Mc-Minn and Campbell, mentioned by Janet Warren, integrate psychology and theology. Ken Evans, the president of the European Association for Integrative Psychotherapy, describes a very relational model of integrative therapeutic approach (Evans, Gilbert, 2005). Linda Finlay presents relational-centered psychotherapy and relational-centered qualitative research. They both underline the role of empathy, openness, non-judgmental presence, inclusion, dialog and cooperation. Linda Finlay writes on her website: “It is crucial to recognise that presence is not a technique or tool to be used to manipulate the other. It is rather ‘a way of being with, without doing to ‘which requires’ authenticity, transparency and humility”. It is being involved in an authentic way. From Christian point of view we could say: love. But the love needs to be used with practical tools like empathy, openness etc. Good relationships heal. Love heals. There is much research on the role of therapeutic relationships and the role of spirituality. The new edition of the book “Psychotherapy relationships that work” (Norcross 2012) provides „two books in one“- one on evidence-based relationship elements and one on evidence-based me-

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thods of adapting treatment to the individual patient. This adapting includes such patient’s characteristics like (among others) his/ her values, preferences and spirituality or religiosity. Prochaska and Norcross (2013) explore each system’s theory of personality, theory of psychopathology and the resulting therapeutic process and therapy relationship. When writing about the future of psychotherapy, the authors point to the integration of religion and spirituality with therapeutic practice. When writing about the integration of psychotherapy, Norcross and Golfried (2005) show a blending of spirituality with psychotherapy.

Attachment theory explores the basic meaning of early relationships. It is the theory best proved from psychoanalytic concepts and it is already used by every psychotherapeutic approach, including cognitive-behaviour therapy. Janet Warren refers also to arguments from neurobiology. When we speak about neurobiology it is fitting to mention the famous researcher Daniel J. Siegel. He is a pioneer in the field

called interpersonal neurobiology (The Developing Mind, 1999, 2012) which seeks the similar patterns that arise from separate approaches to knowledge. This interdisciplinary field invites all branches of science and other ways of knowing to come together and find the common principles from within their often disparate approaches to understanding human experience. In her article Janet Warren points to the need of being aware of our theology. The therapist should be aware of his / her worldview and its impact on the therapeutic relationship and even on psychological diagnosis (Giglio, 1993; Gartner, Carbo, 1994). Christian theology and anthropology gives clear framework for estimating therapy results also from spiritual point of view (Ostaszewska, 2015).

A personal relationship with God is the essence of spirituality / religiosity. The patient's corrective experience in a relationship with a therapist has great meaning for psychotherapy results. As Janet Warren writes: "From a Christian perspective, the psychotherapeutic relationship (employed with wisdom and integrity) can be viewed as a model for the relationship between God and his people". So, the meaning of therapeutic relationship may have also spiritual dimension and may be even more important than has been shown by many research results of recent years.

An article by Anna: <http://www.emcapp.ignis.de/1/#/58>

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**Elena Strigo (Russia)**

## **Comment to “Relational Theology and Relational Therapy”**

The growing interest in Christian theology and its impact on Christian psychotherapy is reflected in the article and directs our attention to the possible integration of relational theology and relational therapy. This integration highlights the importance, in the theory and praxis of therapy, of reflecting on the relationship viewed as God and man relationship. The question in discussion directs our attention to the importance of theological perception of relationship, its basic values, such as love, creativity, flexibility, to the process and modelling of therapeutic relationship.

The human relationship with God, which is at the core of any human activity and interaction, forms the profound background for perception and performing of human relationship. The relational aspects experienced through Christian theology surpass their social, role-playing or behavioural limits and ascend to the Image of God. Thus, the basic question of relationship raised both for theology and for therapy is the essence and the purpose of relationship of God and man and of relationship of the image of God to what is human in a man. Considering this, what is similar in relational theology and relational therapy may become less informative than what is unique in God and man relationship. The mystical aspect of this relationship, irreducible to any known human interrelation, may deepen the impact of theology on the problem of relationship in therapy.

Interrelation of theology and therapy is a complex and multilevel phenomenon. It was stressed that image of God is an important topic in theology. Three approaches (structural, functional, and relational) were presented to cover the application of the image of God to therapy where they correspond to three domains of psychotherapy. According to this theory, by in-



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Article by Elena Strigo you can see here:  
Journal 3, page 102

teracting therapeutically within the relational domain with three views of the image of God, the therapist affects some part of image of God to be reclaimed and reawakened. It must be recognised that the reawakening of the image of God is an inalienable part of Christian therapy. However, the presented theory bypasses the essentially divine nature of image of God, concentrating more on human attributes, more social than spiritual. Thus the image of God becomes a scientific abstraction of a scientific theology and as such can easily be integrated with the methods of psychotherapy. Hence, we lose the true subject in Christian therapy: a person in his unique and mystical relationship with God, in which through revelation he acknowledges a divine aspect of his human-divine personality. Theology understood as a scientific discipline refers to the human-like attributes of the divine image, thus making relational aspects more operational than truly religious. From this point of view, the structured therapeutic relationship, with its theory and methodology of healing, should rather contradict the revelational acknowledgement of God in personal communion with God than to amplify it. The relationship of God and man, even described through compre-

hensible human relationship (father-son relationship), is always an open dialogue, in which the unknowable is more than the knowable. The Orthodox Christian theologians speak of the two ways of knowing God, which accompany each other: apophatic and cataphatic theology. The apophatic theology states that human language is not enough to describe God, and His essence is unknowable. As Met. Kallistos Ware puts it, „Apophatic theology, in its true and full meaning, leads not to an absence but to a presence, not to agnosticism but to a union of love. Thus apophatic theology is much more than a purely verbal exercise, whereby we balance positive statements with negations. Its aim is to bring us to a direct meeting with a personal God, who infinitely surpasses everything that we can say of him, whether negative or positive.“ (Met. Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 1979). However, God revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, and this is the way of cataphatic theology.

Relationship can be described in a wide spectrum of personal interrelations and with God. It reflects personal qualities and attributes, social roles, anthropological identity. Relational therapy in its healing process of injured relationship emphasises loving, compassionate and flexible approaches, by this offering a framework in which to counsel. The religious views and relational theology background of a therapist are central to the relationship healing process. The article is very positive about this. However, the core of the relationship between man and God

is not the healing of human relationships, but the healing of the human soul from sin. Considering this, one of the most disputable points in the article is the idea of redemptive counseling that mimics the redemptive relationship Christians experience with God. According to Christian doctrine of redemption we “are bought with a price”, the great price of the blood of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20). Thus, we all are once and already redeemed by Jesus Christ, Who sacrificed His life to cleanse the world of sin and to make man free from his sins, which corrupted human nature. When we speak of sin we refer to relationship based on God’s given covenant and broken. So, the counsellor is not able to make a client free from sin by any means because it is not his or her domain. This is to be overcome by more strict definition of the relationship between human and divine in a person whether in his personal prayerful relationship with God or in Christian therapy.

In the light of this the role of psychotherapist that mimics the redemptive relationship with the patient is unclear. Does it mean that the sacrifice of God’s Son is not enough? Why and how can the counsellor be a prototype of Jesus Christ: if we believe in His Resurrection, and eternal life, so He is with us and through the Eucharist in us? Why cannot the psychotherapist heal just by being fully human in his or her human relationship with God, with other people and with the patient, thus being a model of healthy relationship in therapy?

**E. Janet Warren**  
**pages 257-280 (Retrospect) in**  
**Cleansing the Cosmos**  
**(Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012)**

Janet Warren has recently published a book on demonology and deliverance - an important but often neglected topic in Christian Psychology. In *Cleansing the Cosmos* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), she offers a different view of evil which is particularly helpful to counselling as it suggests language other than “spiritual warfare.” Here is the synopsis from the back cover as well as an excerpt (Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. [www.wipfandstock.com](http://www.wipfandstock.com)).

**From the back cover:**

Understanding evil spiritual forces is essential for Christian theology, yet discussion is almost always phrased in terms of “spiritual warfare.” Warfare language is problematic, being dualistic, assigning a high degree of ontology to evil, and poorly applicable to ministry. This unique study proposes a biblically-based model as the first alternative to a “spiritual warfare” framework for dealing with the demonic, thus providing insights for preaching, counseling and missiology. Warren develops this model using metaphor theory and examining four biblical themes: Creation, Cult, Christ, and Church. Metaphors of cleansing, ordering, and boundary-setting are developed in contrast to battle imagery, and relevant theological issues are engaged (Boyd’s warfare imagery, Barth’s ideas of evil as “nothingness,” and Eliade’s notion of the sacred and the profane). The role of the Holy Spirit is emphasized, and the ontology of evil minimized. This model incorporates concentric circles, evil being considered peripheral to divine reality, and provides a refreshing alternative to current “spiritual warfare” models.

**Reprinted from the book, pp. 257–60**

The new creation contains no evil, but, until the eschaton, evil is present and needs to be understood. In this study, evil was investigated in four biblical themes: Creation, Cult, Christ, and Church. In the beginning (as discussed in Chapter 4), uncreated darkness, the deep, and

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chaos exist as sinister forces that envelop the earth; there are echoes of ANE demons in the terms. The origins of evil are not explicit, but the concept of a primordial angelic fall offers a logical explanation. Forces of evil are no match for the good Creator God whose Spirit imposes order. God, through merely his word, separates the darkness from the light, and draws a circle on the face of the deep. Evil is limited, not eliminated; chaos is confined, God rejects that which rejects him. Eden, the first sacred space, is filled with life and is the place of divine-human interaction. This sacred space, however, is not perfect: a malevolent snake leads the first humans to mistrust God. Their disobedience results in expulsion from the garden into the liminal space between light and dark, although they continue to benefit from divine blessing. Their sin is a boundary violation, which in turn allows evil forces to violate their God-given boundaries. Microcosms of creation can be seen in the narratives of the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the tabernacle/temple. The chapter on Israel’s Cult examined the functions of sacred space and ritual in dealing with evil. New sacred space (tabernacle/temple) is constructed and includes symbolism of a sacred center and cosmic mountain, which mediate the earth-heaven connection and provide a microcosm of the universe. Sacred space is central, holy, and pure; the dwelling place of God. Binary oppositions of holy/profane, clean/unclean,

life/death, and order/chaos are prevalent in cultic texts. The tabernacle/temple contains gradations of holiness; the five-zone model was deemed the most helpful for conceptualizing grey zones and incorporating the periphery, associated with the wilderness, demons, death, and chaos. Sacred space is threatened by sin and defilement, and there is a close relationship between sin, impurity, and the demonic. When categories of holiness are violated, there is a collapse of order and chaos ensues. Purity/order is maintained and restored through covenantal obedience and ritual; for example, Yom Kippur involves sending sin to the realm of disorder/impurity, thus cleansing the cosmos. Yet Israel continues to sin, to turn away from the sacred center to the evil periphery. Prophets warn of retribution and offer hope of redemption, but evil persists.

Consequently, prior to the advent of Christ, the world is filled with evil; some people are even demonized. Christ bursts into the world as the light in the darkness, the new sacred space, the new creation, the new temple—the locus of divine-human relationship. He is authorized by the Holy Spirit and announces the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, which is holy, pure, and dynamic. Jesus embodies sacred space, extends it, and redefines it, emphasizing moral over ritual impurity. In his ministry and death, Jesus goes out from the center to cleanse and reestablish boundaries on evil. He expels demons with a word, not with weapons of war. He sifts and sorts, separating demons and humans, and then healing humans, restoring them to health; Christ thus renews creation. Healing, cleansing, and exorcisms are intertwined and can be seen as manifestations of creation. Finally, Jesus enters the realm of death and overcomes it too in the “grand cosmic exorcism.” Humans are responsible for believing in Jesus; they are also given authority over demons and disease. There is a complex relationship between divine grace, human responsibility, and demonic influence. Followers of Christ are often symbolized by the Church. They are indwelt individually and corporately by the Holy Spirit and can be viewed as the new creation, the new temple, and the new locus of divine-human interaction. The Church has a threefold task: to walk by the Spi-

rit, to maintain the boundaries of sacred space through ordering and cleansing, and to expand the boundaries of sacred space through mission. All of this is accomplished only through the Spirit, and can be described in terms of the cultic metaphors of cleansing, ordering, and setting boundaries. Their work is hindered by Satan, sin (which is systemic, dynamic, and organic), and the powers, all existing in binary opposition to the Church. The Church functions to renew creation, restore order, assign limits to evil, and cleanse the cosmos.

A model for conceptualizing evil was inspired by the sacred space approach to Creation, the Cult, Christ, and the Church, as well as a broad metaphorical conception of evil. This model was initiated by the sacred space of Eden and the grey zone between it and the surrounding darkness/sea/evil/chaos, and was further refined by the Cultic conception of graded holiness. It was found to apply to Christ and the Church as the new sacred space, although some boundaries were redefined (figure 8.2 illustrates the model’s progression).



Figure 8.2.  
Development of a Model for Conceptualizing Evil

This model incorporates cosmic dualism, but is not limited to it. The center is symbolized by light, life, purity, holiness, Christ, and the Church, and is filled with divine presence. All other space is dependent on it. The periphery is symbolized by death, darkness, uncleanness, sin, and the demonic, and is characterized by divine absence. However, there are buffer zones between the extremes of holy and evil. Importantly, all space is dynamic, holiness is graded, and it is difficult to distinguish between “zones.” The middle zones allow for the extension of God’s grace. Experiential evil can be understood as a consequence of boundary violation; the evil periphery intruding into the grey zones. Space also involves actions. Whereas actions at Zone 1 (e.g., blessing) and Zone 5 (e.g., demonic affliction) are unidirectional, actions in

middle zones are bidirectional. Humans can choose to turn towards God or towards evil. Those who choose evil likely dwell close to the periphery of reality, subject to demonic influence, although the invitation to join the kingdom remains open. Those who worship the one true God are responsible for distinguishing between good and evil, continually reapplying the limits on evil, returning it to the outer regions of chaos, and consequently cleansing the cosmos. Obedience leads to the strengthening of boundaries on evil; disobedience results in these boundaries being loosened. Unlike a warfare model, which emphasizes battle imagery, this model uses the metaphorical system of boundaries, ordering, and cleansing to describe the maintenance and extension of sacred space.

God, through his Spirit, primarily maintains order in the world and purifies it from sin and uncleanness; his light and life flow out into all reality, and he operates with authority not warfare. However, humans have much responsibility. Building on the cultic conception of dirt and disorder, and the imagery of the Church as the household of God, one could conceive of evil as household dust and dirt. It tends to accumulate and requires regular cleaning, or "holy housekeeping." Similarly, sacred actions can be viewed as the expansion and maintenance of the household or sacred space; spreading the light of Christ and sending demons back to their peripheral dwelling. This model not only provides alternate language for discussing evil, but also furthers our understanding of evil.

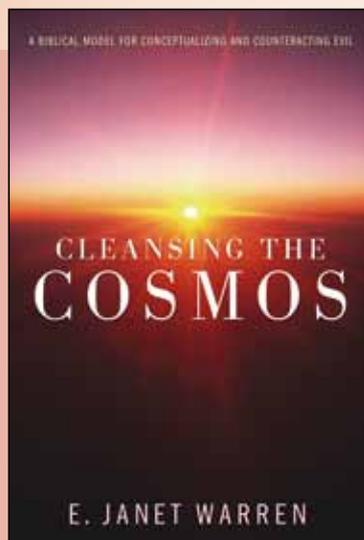
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# CLEANSING THE COSMOS

A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR CONCEPTUALIZING AND COUNTERACTING EVIL

E. JANET WARREN



Understanding evil spiritual forces is essential for Christian theology, yet discussion is almost always phrased in terms of "spiritual warfare." Warfare language is problematic, being dualistic, assigning a high degree of ontology to evil, and poorly applicable to ministry. This unique study proposes a biblically-based model as the first alternative to a "spiritual warfare" framework for dealing with the demonic, thus providing insights for preaching, counseling and missiology. Warren develops this model using metaphor theory and examining four biblical themes: Creation, Cult, Christ, and Church. Metaphors of cleansing, ordering, and boundary-setting are developed in contrast to battle imagery, and relevant theological issues are engaged (Boyd's warfare imagery, Barth's ideas of evil as "nothingness," and Eliade's notion of the sacred and the profane). The role of the Holy Spirit is emphasized, and the ontology of evil minimized. This model incorporates concentric circles, evil being considered peripheral to divine reality, and provides a refreshing alternative to current "spiritual warfare" models.

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E. JANET WARREN is a family physician with an interest in psychotherapy, and an independent theological scholar.

"In a well-informed study, Warren advances our understanding of evil. She shows that, in biblical traditions and from human experience, evil does not only invade and overrun, but violates boundaries, contaminates and infects, and brings darkness, disorder, and chaos. . . . Warren shows evil is to be cleansed and relocated, involving the work of the Spirit and human choice to redefine sacred space and restore order."

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**Sam Berg**

## **Can Christians do Narrative Therapy? Original Goodness instead of Original Sin as the Starting Point for Therapy and Theology**

### **THE VALUE OF PERSONS**

I was first introduced to the practices of narrative therapy by someone who wasn't an enthusiast. At a workshop in Ottawa in the 1994, the presenter whose name I have forgotten gave what seemed a very cerebral description of these ideas. The only thing I remember is that Sue Johnson, the developer of emotionally focused couple's therapy (EFT) asked the question, "Where's the affect in narrative therapy?" I don't recall the answer.

Then, in 1996, I attended a workshop in Saskatoon where the presenter was David Epston, who together with Michael White was one of the foremost developers of these therapeutic practices. I was impressed profoundly by two things. The first was his deep respect for the clients with whom he worked. He presented in a video his work with a young pre-pubescent boy who had been held in a secure facility because of his violence. No previous therapist had lasted longer than ten minutes, David said, because the boy became violent. But David's first question wasn't about any of those things. He asked first of all, "What does Dr. (the name of his psychiatrist) think about you?" I don't know if David had some prior knowledge of what the good doctor thought, but the boy answered, "He thinks I'm a pretty good guy." On the basis of this evaluation by a person who mattered to him, David constructed a conversation in one hour in which this young boy's personal narrative identity conclusions were re-authored to such an extent that he simply saw himself as different from the picture that had been pain-



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ted for him, and which he had to some extent internalized. In a subsequent letter to David, this young man said, "Once you've decided to change, it's not so hard." (!)

The second was the humility with which the therapist worked in relation to the client. The client's agency, the client's language, and the client's story, were all things which the therapist held in greatest regard. Along with this, the therapist's own assessments, theoretical guidelines and any other aspects of his powerful knowledge were held in check as he conversed with his client.

Narrative therapy is described in several ways. One helpful one is provided by Freedman and Combs (1996, p. 22):

1. Realities are socially constructed.
2. Realities are constituted through language.
3. Realities are organized and maintained through narrative.

This approach to therapy takes into account the social context in which the client lives, the lan-

guage with which the client speaks of the events and situations of her/his life, and the narratives that the client has thus constructed to make sense of life. Through practices of reflexive questioning, the problematic realities are deconstructed and preferred realities are re-constructed. In addition to the Freedman and Combs text mentioned above, several other important text books have been written to delineate this work (White and Epston, 1990; Morgan, 2000; White, 2007)

One of the key slogans in narrative practice the idea that the person is not the problem, the problem is the problem. This invites the therapist to look at the problem as something that is other than the person. The person is not a problem, rather, the person has a problem, or in even more narrative terms, a problem has taken a place in a person's life with is constraining the way the person wants to live his life.

The question is, how shall we think of the person with whom we are meeting? Do we see her as a lost sinner, or as an image-bearer? I contend in this paper that the starting point in both theology and psychotherapy will influence the stance we take when counselling or ministering. If the therapist sees the client as damaged, as having a pathology, he will take a different stance than the one that Epston took in the anecdote above. If the pastor begins with the stance that the person seeking pastoral counsel is a depraved sinner, she will respond differently than if she sees that person as a bearer of the image of God. The therapeutic outcomes will likely be quite different.

Evangelical, and especially Calvinist, theology invites us to think of persons in this way. The first truth of five-point Calvinism is that we are in a state of "total depravity." We were born in original sin. "In sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51, KJV). The conclusion to this then is that we begin with a pathologizing of the person. The person is the problem.

This theology shares with many approaches to psychotherapy this attitude towards the problems with people. In psychotherapy, it's called psychopathology. In psychotherapy then, the first step is the "assessment," in its most abso-

lute terms complete with a DSM diagnosis. The starting point in psychotherapy, as in evangelical theology, is the human problem, the thing that's wrong, the thing that must be fixed.

This is one of the basic tenets of evangelical theology, based on the New Testament teachings about the problem of sin. The most extensive description of this is in Romans 1-3, where the Apostle Paul concludes that "there is none righteous" and that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God". Dabney (<http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/dabney/5points.htm#t>) writes, "By original sin we mean the evil quality which characterizes man's natural disposition and will. We call this sin of nature original, because each fallen man is born with it, and because it is the source or origin in each man of his actual transgressions."

The doctrine of original sin is often one of the first statements made in a list of articles of faith. Evangelical preaching is often intended to be "preaching for conviction," that is convincing the listeners of their sinfulness in order to then offer the good news of salvation. The suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, it is believed, cannot be understood apart from the context of human utter sinfulness. The person is the problem, and must be convinced that s/he is the problem.

This approach is being challenged by missionaries who are seeking to relate to cultures which have a different understanding of human failings. Several authors in a recent edition of *Mission Frontiers* have described their efforts to make the gospel understandable in the Buddhist culture of Thailand. (See MF Nov/Dec 2014). For example, Banton and Mali Boon-Itt (2014) state: "Sin: in Buddhism there is no such concept, only bad deeds, *bap*—that is black actions (*kamma*), which in Buddhism is action that is unskillful, *akusala*, hampering one's attainment of *nibbana*." The anthropology of the practices of narrative therapy also contradicts this fundamental belief in human fallenness. There is a problem, to be sure, but it is not the person. The problem has entered the person's life in such a way as to oppress and constrain the person in



Creation of the Birds

certain ways. The role of the therapeutic conversation is not to assess the problem to arrive at a diagnosis, but to help the person discover her own values, his own positive life commitments, her preferred outcomes of life, in such a way that the problem loses its power in the person's life. The therapist's task, it can be said, is to help the person discover, not his original sin, but his original goodness.

This of course is not so foreign to the bible itself. It's where the biblical account begins. Throughout the six days of creation, God's verdict at the end of each day was, "And God saw that it was good." At the end of the sixth day, having completed his creating with the creation of the "adam", ("adam" is the transliteration of the Hebrew word which is often in the first chapters translated as "man", only later as the proper name of the first male, Adam) God pronounced that it was "very good."

Ought not this to be the place where our theological anthropology begins. In the beginning, God created, and it was very good. How did the first point of the five points of Calvinism, that of "total depravity" become the first point of systematic theology? At the very best it ought to be preceded by, first this truth, from Genesis 1, that there is original goodness, and secondly, from Genesis 2, the vital importance of human relationships (v. 18 – "it is not good for the man to be alone.) Then, in chapter 3, we can begin to address the human condition as described in that remarkable story about The Fall.

Narrative Therapy, in the way in which it honours the value of the person, calls us to a different starting place in our dealings with our clients, and indeed in all of our relationships. It calls us to pay attention to the power relationships and the power differentials in the relationships. As therapists, we occupy the position of power in the relationship, and thus it becomes the responsibility of the therapist, the person in the position of power, to monitor the effects of that power, and to be accountable to the other, the client, in the exercise of that power. (White, 1997)

This contrasts remarkably from other approaches that call for "interventions", in which we intervene in the person's life from our privileged positions of knowledge. It contrasts from those approaches that follow the medical model, and guide us to make an assessment, and then apply a treatment. And it contrasts remarkably from those understandings of evangelicalism and evangelization that invite us to see the other as a poor, lost sinner, who must gratefully respond to the wonderful news of the Gospel that we bring. The aura of superiority that all of these approaches bring conveys to the client, or the "evangelizee", that s/he is somehow inferior, and thus indebted to us for what we are offering.

Rather, what we are called upon is to do all in our power to level the ground on which we both stand. The attention to the power differential is always the responsibility of the one in the position of power. The other has two possibilities. Either he will acquiesce, and give over responsibility for his life to the person in power, or he will rebel, and fail to be helped by the services that the therapist, or the evangelist, offers.

When, on the other hand, the power differential is levelled by the one who has the power, this gives the other the freedom to respond as an equal.

From the vantage point of the New Testament, this is in fact what Jesus did. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The work of the therapist, and the evangelist, is to discover how to dwell where the client dwells.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ ... who emptied himself ... and took on the form of a servant..." (Phil. 2:4ff). The work of the therapist is to take what some have called a "not-knowing" stance with respect to the client's story, and meanings. It requires a laying aside of our knowledges – about who humans are, what problems are, and how people change – in order to be truly present with this unique individual, this unique couple, or this unique family, and to hear the stories with which they come. It requires of the evangelist to lay to one side the certainty of the gospel in order to come

to understand how the other hears, and what the other values. It requires of the evangelist to understand the other's point of view to the point of being "almost persuaded" himself. Then, and only then, has the evangelist earned the right to share his Good News story.

## EXTERNALIZATION OF PROBLEMS

Let's come back to the question of original sin. I stated above that we ought to start our theological anthropology not with this idea, but with that of our original goodness, which is where the Bible starts. I don't mean at all to deny the existence of sin. Genesis 3 and 4 describe that soon enough. And of course we need only look around our societies, and our world to find abundant evidence of this fact. As Neibuhr said, sin is the one theological doctrine for which there is empirical evidence (cited in Toews, J., 2013, p. 90).

But narrative therapy does an interesting thing with this. Recall that the person is not the problem; rather the problem is the problem. One of the basic narrative practices is something called externalization. One of the things that problems do to people is to convince them that their identities – their "narrative identity conclusions" – are bound up with their problems. For example, the phrase, "I am depressed" expresses such an identity. The practice of externalizing the problem is to begin to speak not of the adjective "depressed" but the noun "depression", as an entity in itself, with which the client has a relationship. The therapist responds to the expression "I am depressed" by asking, "How long have you had depression?" Such a question introduces some limitations into the conversation about depression, which begin to subtly challenge the globalized identity of "I am depressed." In the ensuing conversation, the client begins to discover within herself that the problem has not in fact taken over her whole life, but that there are certain areas of her life that have been reserved or protected or retrieved from the problem of depression.

If this sounds too simple or fanciful, the reader might try such a conversation himself. Begin to

think of some problem, not as an identity characteristic, but as an entity outside of oneself. Discover then, the fact that you are not your problem, but that you have a relationship with it, and within that relationship you have responsibilities and possibilities for your life that the problem has not removed. The problem has only succeeded in obscuring those possibilities and convinced you that its oppressive ways are the sum total of your life.

Let's come back to the question of sin, again. The Bible can be understood as a manual on the externalization of sin. The most significant place where this is done is in Romans 7. In the startling passage, Paul writes, "Romans 7:16–20 (ESV)

*16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*

Notice how sin is described as something other than the person. The person is struggling with sin. Sin has a hold of the person. But the person is not sin. Sin is "not-me". The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem. Or, as the Apostle would say, the person is not sin, sin is sin.

The person, then, is described as something other than sin. In fact, the person is the one who is capable of not sinning. "There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). "If God is for us, who can be against us" (v. 31)? "There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 39).

The theological response to this might be that these promises are for believers, for those who have received Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, and are now following him. We thus

draw this hard line between the two classes of people, those who are inside and those who are outside, those who are saved and those who are lost, those who know Christ and those who don't. And we assign all those who don't know Christ to perdition. We describe them as being "in the world," as not us, as sinners.

The function of our efforts at formulating orthodox theology is to describe as clearly as we possibly can where the boundary lies between those who are inside and those who are outside. We devise elaborate statements of faith, bolstered by long lists of scriptures, so that those inside will know exactly what we believe and what we don't believe, and that those outside will know what is required of them if they wish to come inside.

The Bible itself, however, points in another direction. Romans 2:14–16 (ESV)

*14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*

There is in this passage, buried in the long description of sin, a hint at what is possible for those who are "outside." The Gentiles, who are outside of the law, are able naturally to do what the law requires. There is something written on their hearts. They have a conscience. They struggle with right and wrong, perhaps in the same way that the believers of Romans 7 struggle.

I like to call this capability the echo of the image of God in them. C. S. Lewis in his famous *Mere Christianity* discusses something similar in his discussion about the proof of God's existence. He argues from the moral argument, that everyone has some kind of moral compass. Even the most morally obtuse person, he says, knows when something wrong has been done to him.

In most of my conversations with clients, I find myself wondering and asking about their values, the things they hold dear, the life commitment that they have made, or wish that they have made. So often I hear of values not lived up to, commitments that have not been kept, and actions that are contrary to how they would like to see themselves. I find that conversations that bring these values and ideals to the surface of the conversation, and bring them into the storyline of the person's life, have great potential in turning lives around, in discovering and acting on new, healthier and more preferred ways of living. I maintain that this ubiquitous value-system that people have can be seen as the echo of the image of God. The therapeutic thing then is not to seek to convince the person about her sinfulness – she already knows that. Neither is it to help the person "accept responsibility" for their problem – she is already over-burdened by it. Rather, it is to help the person recover, to hear again, that echo.

#### RE-AUTHORING IN ACCORD WITH PREFERRED VALUES

I call it an echo because it is a sound, coming not from the origin of the sound itself (Himself), but reverberating through the connections with others that each person has had. As God created "adam" in his image and likeness (Gen. 1), so Adam begat sons and daughters in his own image and likeness (Gen. 5). But this is not a merely genetic transmission. The echo of the image of God is passed on, imperfectly to be sure, in the nurture that the new-born receives from the caregiver. Nature and nurture come together to produce this echo. And thus, everyone develops some kind of internal moral compass.

In a delightful article on "blue collar therapy," Steven Stosny (, 2013 Nov/Dec, p. 28) writes that "because I work exclusively with clients trapped in destructive habits, I prefer the shorter route using their core values to motivate practice that will bring about long-term changes." Rather than seeking insight about the past to motivate change, by ferreting out a "root cause", some historical insight into the source of the



Fall of Man

psychopathology, he finds that a much stronger motivation comes when the person reclaims preferred values about himself. Thus, the client is asked, “What are the three most important qualities about you as a person?” “What are the three most important assets your partner brings to your relationship?”

Stosny writes, “Intimate partners motivated to feel valuable tend to show compassion and kindness. Those motivated to feel powerful invoke shame or fear to get their way, or use force or coercion to dominate” (ibid.). The task of therapy, however, is not to simply build up self-esteem, but to uncover those positive preferred values that are already there...”

I propose that beginning a theology with the doctrine of original sin, and specifically, the Calvinist idea of “total depravity”, does precisely the opposite. It obscures what God created. One way in which theologians do this is by giving Ps. 51:5 full theological import: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” This verse gives vivid expression to the notion that our sin begins with conception, and thus is very “original.” This was of course Augustine’s contribution to western theology (Toews, 2013, pp73ff.) It even implicates the act of intercourse itself and allows for the possibility of tainting it with sinfulness. A theology that begins here will be bolstered by the Pauline description of our sinfulness as given in Romans 1-3, and will lead to obscuring any other possibilities.

Overlooked, then, is a psalm like Ps. 139:13-17

*13 For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.  
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.  
15 My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.*

*17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!*

This passage is sometimes dismissed as poetic. It has been used by Christian pop-psych authors to prove that “God doesn’t make junk.” But it isn’t given the same theological weight as Psalm 51. Both psalms of course say something poetically powerful about our experience as persons living lives before the face God. Both need to be understood as such, as poetic hyperbole, and as expressions of a felt sense (Cornell, 2013, p. 37.) Cornell describes felt senses as experiences that “widen our awareness to enable us to take in the complex whole of a situation and its many interconnections.” These experiences are common to artists, poets, and to readers of the Bible. As we contemplate the two passages together, we discover the richness of the human condition, most often captured in the expression, “fallen image bearers.”

One of the results of beginning with original sin is that it leads those who begin their theology with the idea of total depravity with a sense of superiority over those who don’t “have the gospel”. We see ourselves as the possessors and proprietors of truth, which must be then dispensed to those benighted ones whom we encounter who don’t have it. This has found expression, among other places, in the attitude towards missions that some missionaries have taken. A worst expression of this is the history of the European expansion into the Americas and the encounter with the indigenous peoples, who were seen as ignorant, savages, and lost. The result was a de-personalization of them, and a failure to see them as human beings, equally possessing the image of God. This is the result, I maintain, of a theology that begins with human sinfulness.

Suppose a different stance had been taken, one which begins with original goodness, and the idea that the new peoples encountered equally bear the image of God. How might the missionaries then have first sought to understand, and to engage, from a position of “not-knowing” how these newly discovered peoples have constructed their worlds? How might a biblical

understanding of original goodness lead to a curiosity about the worldview that these newly “discovered” people have? How might this curiosity lead to a more productive dialogue that would in fact pave the way for a reciprocal curiosity on the part of the other? And how might that reciprocal curiosity pave the way for a more productive sharing of the good news of God’s love in Jesus?

Rupert Ross (2009), academic and a judge describes these ideas in his paper, “Heartsong Final”. He writes,

*Aboriginal people often stress that this emphasis on relational ‘goals-to-be-sought’ contrasts with the illness-based focus that seems to prevail in western psychology. The healer’s duty is to emphasize what we can become in the future, because it is within us already, rather than focus on how we have failed in the past and are still failing now. I have wondered if the western world’s allegiance to the doctrine of original sin accounts for this difference, and I found it interesting that a Buddhist monk and translator for the Dalai Lama wondered the same:*

*“Since the potential for actualizing Buddhahood is present in every sentient being, the Buddhist approach is therefore closer to the idea of original goodness than that of original sin.”*

*The emphasis on relational goals-to-be-sought means something else as well: it is the ‘way-of-relating’ that is assessed and judged, not the person (emphasis his). Given the driving presumption that everyone is capable of learning new ways-of-relating, it is critical that people not become defined by a particular act. As a result, the ‘perpetrator’ is carefully called ‘the person who has harmed’, and the victim is always called ‘the person who has been harmed’. (pp. 20f)*

Again, this is not to deny the existence of sin, and that I am not denying its harmful effects in the lives of persons, couples, families, societies and our world. There is ample evidence for this of course. All of the problems that show up in the counselling offices of the nation’s therapists can be traced back to human sinfulness, which

according to the biblical story was introduced in Genesis 3 when the first couple broke faith with their Creator, and discovered shame.

A better solution might be the one suggested by Dueck (2014) when he describes “historical” sin in place of original sin. Or, we might include Thompson’s observation. Speaking of findings in brain research, he states:

*“In fact, our right mode is often overcome by our left mode’s systematic tendency, so that when we’re asked how God views us, we automatically respond with words like sinful, depraved, and wicked. And we can refer to particular passages of Scripture to prove it. We’re really good at that. But that is not always good for us.”(2010, p. 140).*

What I am opposed to is how this sinfulness has been called original, and total, and how that has obscured a basic fundamental truth about the human being, namely, that we were created good!

I submit then, that the practices arising out of the primacy of the doctrine of “total depravity,” and of making original sin the starting point of our working theology, leads to an unwholesome, counter-productive, pathologizing and harmful practice of evangelical church life. By working theology, I mean the theology that guides our practices as evangelicals. I don’t mean the doctrinal statements that usually begin with a statement about God, or the Bible, or God’s self-revelation to us. I mean the ideological starting point of our approach to people, to our world, to our culture. If we see the three sources of sin, the world, the flesh and the devil, as the beginning of our understanding, we will see church life and ministry in a certain harmful way.

There is an interesting parallel between the effect of the doctrine of original sin on the life of the church and the medical model of psychotherapy which begins with the “assessment”, in which the first task is to diagnose. Both lead to subjugation of the human being with whom we have to do. Both require a correction, along the lines suggested in this paper.

If on the other hand, we begin, where the Bible begins, with an understanding of the goodness of original creation, then the direction our ministries will take, the ways in which we will regard the people who are attracted to our churches, and the ways in which we respond to them and the problems they bring, will be starkly different. We will seek to understand and to hear where the echo of the image of God might be heard in their life stories, and we will seek to amplify that echo through our conversations and relationships with them. We will in fact be involved in “making disciples” as Jesus asked us to.

*“Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts, where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God’s eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time.” (Merton, nd).*

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Hope of the Drowning

Phil Monroe (USA)

## Comment to „Can Christian Counsellors do Narrative Therapy? Original goodness instead of original sin as the starting point for therapy and theology.“

I thank Sam Berg for his efforts in raising an important question about the starting point for counselors as they assess and engage their clients. The heart of his essay may be found in this short quotation,

“The question is, how shall we think of the person with whom we are meeting? Do we see her as a lost sinner, or as an image-bearer?”

Sam rightly points out that clients are both sinners and divine image-bearers, yet he argues that clinical assessment and intervention strategies based primarily on the reality of the Fall unhelpfully focus on pathology, ignore hidden client capacities, root causes and medical model interventions, and create distance between the superior therapist and the sinner client. Who is the culprit in this problem? Interestingly, he points less to the medicalization of psychotherapy and more to the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity. This doctrine, from Berg’s point of view, encourages counselors to treat the person as the problem rather than a person with a problem.

Instead of starting with original sin, Berg wishes to start with original goodness still inherent in all. We are more than sin. We have the law of God written on our hearts which gives us direction, values, and standards. Therapy is not so much a search for sin but reclaiming (re-learning?) what has been lost regarding a sense of personhood. When both therapist and client come to the work of therapy with this in mind, then the work done in session is more mutual, dialogical, and strengths-based rather than diagnostic, didactic, and pathology-oriented.

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### Creation vs. Fall Focus?

As a Calvinist myself, I would prefer to nuance the demon here as a distortion of the doctrine of total depravity due to a failure within the Reformed community to emphasize (recognize?) the conspicuous image of God in every human being. By total depravity, Calvinists believe that original sin corrupts the whole of our beings; no part of a person and their faculties—body and soul—is free from the corruption of sin. Sin is propagated in each generation not merely by learning but first through genetics. However, such a doctrine does not intend to say that human beings are completely depraved, that every faculty is as sinful as it could possibly be. In fact, Calvin starts out his Institutes by claiming that we can know God by learning about our own human nature (and vice versa). This would not be possible for sinners if the image of God were not still present albeit deformed.

However, I would concur with Berg that some forms of Christian or biblical counseling do focus unhelpfully on the sin side of human problems. It appears that in the late 1960s and early 1970s early nouthetic forms of counseling developed in reaction against humanistic forms of counseling. Rogerian and Maslowian models of personhood and change seemed to some to promote pathology as learned behavior rather than inherent. Incidentally, Rogers is well-known

to have attributed his person-centered therapy in reaction to “dark Calvinism” taught to him in childhood.

Indeed it is true that we can trace human suffering back to original sin. Yet, counseling models focusing on sin as the cause of human problems too easily morph into searching for willful sin as the cause of particular problems. You are depressed? It is because you sinned. You are anxious? It is because you sinned or lack faith. In my psychopathology course I ask my students to consider what it means to be an image-bearer of God. Typically, student responses include characteristics such as reason, relationality, agency, self-less love, and the like. I then split the class in half to ask one group to develop questions they might ask a first-time client if starting from *imago dei* as the ultimate reality. The other half is charged to consider questions they might ask if starting from the Fall as ultimate reality. This little project rarely fails to convince students that starting points shape entire counseling relationships. I conclude by asking students whether they tend towards being a creation counselor or a Fall counselor. Most students conclude that it is tempting to look only at problems rather than client capacities and inherent value. But when they consider times in their lives when they have been themselves most helped, most conclude that being respected, listened to, validated (vs. blamed and exhorted) enabled them to work through problems and take an active role in their own growth.

### **Narrative Therapies and the Construction of Meaning**

The essay only briefly speaks of narrative therapy as an alternative to counseling starting from original sin. Berg provides little explanation of this model nor does he connect it to the emerging therapies today that utilize narrative construction as central to the change process. Berg cites Epston and White’s work and their focus on processes such as externalization of the problem and support for the client to explore and recreate her own story, agency, and identity.

Today, therapies like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) are being used to help clients explore and examine explicit and implicit values, accept realities (much like externalizing

problems), and choose behavioral patterns in keeping with stated commitments. While this model represents a third generation of behavioral therapy, it too prioritizes the voice and insights of the client.

In addition, narrative exposure therapies such as Narrative Exposure Therapy and Cognitive Processing Therapy also prioritize the voice and story of victims of psychosocial trauma. While new perspectives are sought, they develop not so much from the expert therapist who corrects perspective but more from a mutual bearing witness to the story. Such witness often presents opportunity to highlight hidden narratives, consider new perspectives borne out of trauma (posttraumatic growth), and question distorted perspectives gained during trauma.

These narrational and relationship-oriented counseling methods ought to be foundational for every Christian counselor. Therapy is far less a “telling” than it is a “being with” ministry. We see this illustrated by Jesus as he interacts with the man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5) or the woman at the well (John 4). We see relationship and dialog take precedence over presentation of a verdict; we see gentle questions regarding their narratives prioritizing respect for the “sinner’s” voice. Essential to the Christian life is the construction of a narrative about the identify of believers are in this world. Christian counselors needn’t worry that such constructing of narratives are done without regard to truth. Those interested in narrative work done from a distinctly evangelical frame may wish to explore Kevin Vanhoozer’s 2010 essay on theodrama (narrative) shaped by therapists as “acting” or script coaches.

I thank Sam berg for the essay on addressing clients from a positive co-constructive perspective and urge that all counselors re-consider starting assumptions that unnecessarily focus on the negative in the lives of those they help.

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Walter Thiessen

## The Mosaic of Maturing Spirituality. An Alternative Model for Spiritual Development

### Abstract

There are reasons to question the sequential and hierarchical nature of structural stage theories of faith development, especially in regard to adults. This article suggests a conceptual, two-dimensional model of spiritual development. The first dimension is the continuum of maturity defined as increasing complexity held together by integrity and is exemplified by the metaphor of a mosaic. The second dimension is a series of “facets” or themes that are understood to exist simultaneously, though one or more facets are typically highlighted during any particular season of a person’s life. A highlighted facet will often give shape and content to the growing edge of spiritual maturity.

The four facets of the second dimension are characterised by the central themes of 1) Chaos and Order, 2) Love, Forgiveness, and Community, 3) Freedom and Change, and 4) Mystery, Peace and Trust. These facets unpredictably recur throughout a person’s life, and it is suggested that the third facet has a tendency (though not a necessity) to bifurcate into one of two pathways: a) Revolution and Resistance or b) Imagination and Hope. This model, though untested by formal research, is offered in the hope that it more functionally represents the varied complexity of human experience and can be taught in a manner that is free from some of the biases and elitism which are difficult to avoid with structural models.

Since 1981, James Fowler’s faith development theory (FDT; 1981, 2001) has largely held the imagination of practical theologians and developmental psychologists as the best model for understanding how we approach faith differently over the course of a life span. This has not



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been because FDT has been free of criticism or has silenced all of its critics; rather, as Stephen Parker (2010) concluded, in spite of mixed levels of support for components of FDT, “those inclined to look elsewhere for models of spiritual or religious development with more empirical support will not find the picture any better, and often not as well supported as Fowler’s model” (p. 246). And so it has remained the theory that underlies a variety of more popularized models (Peck, 1987; Schmelzer, 2008; McLaren, 2012).

### The Limitations of Fowler’s Model

In the face of critics and his own exploration of postmodern approaches, Fowler (2001) has insisted that FDT was right to establish stages that are “sequential, invariant, and hierarchical” (p. 167). Yet, according to Parker’s assessment, this particular aspect only has support as long as the emphasis is on cognitive aspects (2010, p. 245) and focuses on pre-adolescents (p. 239). One might suggest, therefore, that Fowler’s claim to have successfully established “sequential, inva-

riant, and hierarchical” stages has only proven to be true to the extent that they have mirrored Piaget’s stages of cognitive development.

This is not to suggest that the more psychosocial, affective or relational aspects of Fowler’s theory have not proven to be quite helpful in rounding out his theory and making it useful to countless (primarily Christian) educators and counsellors. Yet, in spite of these years of broad appreciation, there are very practical concerns that do not go away. Two concerns that I would draw attention to are 1) the limitation of the theory in explaining real-life complexity (especially for adults) which quite often does not appear to be “sequential, invariant and hierarchical” and 2) the tendency of the theory to appear elitist or even condescending when taught.

Regarding the first concern, I would suggest that there are many ways in which we have all encountered developmental pathways that have not seemed to match Fowler’s sequence (such as the regression toward fundamentalism noted by Streib, 2001) or situations in which we have noticed even in ourselves the simultaneous presence of more than one stage at work (a situation which was demonstrated empirically by Kaplan, Crockett & Tivlan, 2014, in regard to Kohlberg’s moral development stages).

Regarding the second concern, we face the embarrassing reality that those teaching on the stages of faith generally see themselves as operating largely in stage 5, conjunctive faith, teaching an audience of those primarily ranging from stage 3 to stage 4. The presenter, hence, appears to be urging the audience to grow more into his or her own likeness.

In recent years, new theories have been gaining a footing in developmental circles which may support other ways to frame a model. Some of these theories are naturally oriented to seeking explanations which avoid the oversimplification of sequential, invariant and hierarchical stages. The model which I would like to propose is largely an intuitive response<sup>1</sup> to a long career in Christian education and counselling, but

<sup>1</sup> Intuitive responses can be understood within complex systems as one way in which new possibilities emerge from the multiplicity of previous understandings. They can also, of course, be understood as a way in which one learns in conjunction with transcendent experience.

it has occasionally been inspired by and affirmed by readings about complex and dynamic systems (cf. Siegel, 2001; Howe & Lewis, 2005; van Geert, 2009, 2011; Kaplan, Crockett & Tivlan, 2014).

### **Dimension One – Maturity: a continuum of increasing complexity with integrity**

There are two primary elements to this model of understanding faith development or, as I would prefer, spiritual development,<sup>2</sup> that can be seen as operating on two different dimensions. One dimension is our pathway toward increasing complexity. This is a tendency that we see in virtually all organic systems; psychologically, for example, we might point to an increase in neural connections or the broadening of our behavioural repertoire.

In order to equate complexity with spiritual maturity, however, we have to qualify it in this way: maturity is an increase of complexity that is held together by integrity. Complexity per se can overwhelm, and this is why our brains go through seasons where “pruning” is as important as the creation of new synaptic connections. Integrity has two components that are somewhat held in tension: the integrity of those “wholes” (Gestalts) that are taken in and the overall integrity of the person. The latter refers to our ability to hold together and make sense out of all that we are, all we have been and even what we begin to see ourselves becoming.

A mosaic, then, is an ideal metaphor for the nature of maturity. A good mosaic is made up of individual pieces which each have their own integrity (including, for example, a trace of its history and origin), and all together they form a new pattern or whole which has an entirely different level of integrity.

Our journey down this road to maturity – toward increasing complexity held together with integrity – is highly idiosyncratic. Our cognitive abilities are one component of this developmental journey, but there are many other factors

<sup>2</sup> I appreciate Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude’s (2003) definition of spiritual development as „the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence. It is the developmental ‚engine‘ that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious [contexts]“ (pp. 205-206).



Joseph Dreaming

including: emotions, relationships, personality, environment, life history, and the communities in which we construct our understandings of reality. Our unique paths are based on our self-organizing tendencies to seek new, emerging responses to this dynamic system of interactions. For some, particularly for personalities or communities tending toward openness and flexibility, this process of increasing complexity could be relatively smooth and continuous. Since change and newness are embraced, small opportunities for growth are frequently appropriated and maturing moves steadily forward. Perhaps there are moments when “sideways” routes or even doubling back are required in order to correct for unhelpful choices.

For others, whose personalities and/or communities favour stability and self-protection, many opportunities for growth are at least initially resisted until a pressure builds up that requires a sudden step forward. There may be moments when a deep awareness of the failure of one’s attempts at self-protection lead to moments of “conversion.”

This journey toward increasing complexity with integrity has a backbone of cognitive development with its commonly understood processes of assimilation and accommodation (the latter required to grant appropriate integrity to new information and experience). There is much more to maturing than this cognitive expansion, however. There are also important processes of healing (facing, accepting and integrating wounds and trauma) and broadening our repertoire of emotional and relational skills, especially including empathy.

Maintaining our own personal integrity in the midst of expanding complexity will also necessitate interlocking skills of narrating our lives and discerning what kinds of engagement with the world are life-giving and which are life-negating. We need to be growing in our ability to harmonize our inner thoughts, feelings, perspectives and worldviews with our outward actions lest we become deeply fragmented or hypocritical.

This understanding of spiritual maturity, then, does not construe the universal ideal as being the “biggest” or most complex, but as finding the best fit given one’s personality and one’s

personal history. In order to maintain integrity, some people will have to grow in complexity at a very slow pace, and this is ideal for them. Bigger is not morally or essentially better, though it may have a practical bearing on one’s role in a community. For example, communities are probably best led and advised by those who are able to grow into a significant degree of complexity. Thus maturing, increasing complexity with integrity, becomes shorthand for a very complex, non-linear process with many overlapping and mutually responsive processes at work. Forcing this complexity into structural stages – especially beyond adolescence when neurological changes no longer give a measure of credence to cognitive or even emotional capacity changes – cannot help but do violence to our understanding of how this developing maturity takes place. Oversimplifying the process, by creating stable structures out of certain chosen themes, will force narrow expectations on people and will blind us to the many aspects of maturity that are not well captured by stage language.

### **Dimension Two – Free-flowing “Facets” or Themes**

Avoiding stages does not necessitate jettisoning what has been appreciated through the years when structural stage theories such as Fowler’s have proven their intuitive and practical worth. For this reason, I propose a second dimension of cross-cutting “facets” – key themes or domains which become highlighted, “figure” in Gestalt terms, for a season.<sup>3</sup> I believe that much of the value of Fowler’s stage theory has been its attendance to certain important themes in development which fit into a larger pattern (largely layered over a base structure of cognitive development), most notably such themes as seeking individual integrity by questioning

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3 What I envision is somewhat similar to Streib’s (2001) reference to styles in light of Loevinger’s (1976) “milestone model” which “draws the respective style as a rising curve that descends again after a culminating point and persists on a lower level, whereas the subsequent styles attain their own climaxes. From such developmental perspective, there are no plausible reasons, either, why a certain style should not, at least as precursor, develop earlier than structural-developmental theories normally assume, but especially that a potential relevance of a certain style continues after its biographical peak” (p.149).

conventional understandings or later themes of developing the capacity to accept paradox or to value multiple perspectives.

So my second dimension of facets honours these themes but separates them from distinct stages of development, particularly from any sense of progressing through these themes in a way which is invariant, sequential or hierarchical; rather, these facets, I propose: a) are always simultaneously present within us even if often relatively latent in terms of our attending to them, b) become more or less the focus of our attention for a season (possibly more than one at a time), c) will proceed through their seasons in any sequence and with much repetition, d) will often provide the shape by which the other dimension (i.e. maturity) develops, e) highlight the spiritual elements of maturity, and f) are linked to each other; i.e., increasing maturity in any one facet enhances the opportunities for deeper maturing in the other facets.

There is little doubt in my mind that these facets are somewhat arbitrary – they could be described in very different terms, and there could easily be value in seeing more (or perhaps fewer) facets than these four. Nevertheless, I have found it possible to see how much of our spiritual development can be described in relation to the four facets introduced below.<sup>4</sup> For the sake of brevity, each facet will largely be described by a summary of suggested “lessons,” which may exemplify the type of growth possible as that facet is highlighted in one’s life. For some, these lessons may be very empirical, human and rational, while for many they deeply integrate religious practices, institutions and beliefs as well as experienced interaction with transcendence.

### **1 - Chaos and Order**

The first facet centres around responding to cause and effect, to learning the consequences of our actions and those of others. During seasons when this facet is prominent, we give attention to the nature of what is predictable and what is not in the world around us. We explore experiences of justice that at times seem inexorable and at other times elusive.

Lesson One – We pay attention to the conse-

quences of our actions (individual and shared) in order to increase the kinds of outcomes that we want and need in our lives. We do more and more of what works. In the beginning this will be based on fairly immediate consequences, but as we get older we develop the ability to delay gratification. There may be shifts in the degree to which we are motivated by personal or shared consequences.

Lesson Two – We find ways to cope with the chaos and unfairness of the world. There are probably two key aspects of such coping – a narrative belief, to “make sense” of the chaos, and a corresponding behaviour that grows out of that belief. For some, accepting a set of rules and punishments helps to impose some order, at least for a time, though eventually we come to see the chaos that remains or is even caused by “law.”

Lesson Three – A serious complication develops, possibly quite early in life, when we realise that chaos is not only in the external world, but in our own internal world. Thoughts and feelings take a hold of us that don’t seem to be our choice. We have difficulty choosing actions that lead to the consequences that we want, leading to personal confusion and pain. We explore ways of coping with this apparent inner division or multiplicity.

Getting Stuck – We can get bogged down in this facet by not mastering goal-oriented action. We stay focused on instant gratification or develop no impulse control. We blame or envy others when we are not able to get what we desire. We feel a deep sense of shame when we fail or when others see our weakness. We believe that we are helpless and unable to change the circumstances of our lives, as in our experience of addictions.

Of course, there are a myriad of spiritual questions in these lessons. Do we understand God as a Judge? Is it God that accuses or Satan? Or do we see karmic forces at work? How were chaos and order formed in the origins of our world – in Creation? Is there spiritual help or are there disciplines that we can learn to deal with our inner chaos? Are there consequences beyond that which we can see – in the bigger global context or in the afterlife?

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<sup>4</sup> I assume that it is possible to see some echoes of the major central stages from the models of Fowler and others.



Love Makes the Darkness Light

## **2 - Love, Forgiveness and Community**

We are, undoubtedly, relational beings from before our birth, but social questions take on a whole new consciousness when we develop what psychologists call a “theory of mind,” the awareness that what goes on in my mind is different from what goes on in the minds of others, even those closest to me. That this ability (around the age of four) newly enables both empathy and deception testifies to the complexity of our new social world.

This second facet deals with finding our way in this challenging social reality, primarily dealing with the building and/or re-building (healing) of relationships and social networks. Attachment theorists have provided a rich basis with which we can understand how we engage with these social realities in ways that have been significantly shaped by our earliest relationships. Lesson One – We find ways to deal with our aloneness and explore ways to reach out to others. We learn ways to respond when others reach out to us. We form different levels of trust with different people and negotiate how close or distant we want to be. We develop a tendency to be either primarily single-focused (self-centred) or dual-focused (empathic).

Lesson Two – We find ways to respond to the threats to our relationships and develop ways to repair or otherwise cope with relationships when we wrong others or they wrong us. Skills of acknowledging mistakes and weakness, expressing remorse and apology, and choosing forgiveness are central keys which then open the door to the renegotiation of trust. We find ways to respond to our own sense of failure or inadequacy, hopefully enabling a return to or maintenance of self-worth and confidence.

Lesson Three – We take an active part in building community and culture, gaining some sense of our roles. We find our place in a cluster of relationships and a network of communities. We explore the invitations and limits of commitment and loyalty: who do we identify as our people and who are our enemies? We learn the appropriate times to compete or collaborate.

Getting Stuck – There are many ways to get stuck rather than progress in our ability to construct and restore relationships. Development of insecure attachment styles summarize the more

common ways of getting stuck and are either addressed or continued throughout life as some learn to detach and others form very unstable patterns of relating. Those who are relationally passive may be able to thrive in relationships and communities as long as others do the work but feel powerless to reach out to individuals or actively build community when there is no clear invitation. Finally, many are unable to respond to relational damage, remaining trapped in bitterness or resentment for long periods of time, unable to choose or even imagine forgiveness. No paths to reconciliation seem available, and the damage spreads and affects more relationships.

A central spiritual question has to do with whether there exists a Love transcendent to our human experience. Do we have an experienced relationship with God? If so, in what ways does this enable or provide an example for our human relationships? Does God forgive? On what terms?

## **3 - Freedom and Change**

The essence of the third facet is our need to see and move beyond the weaknesses of the contexts and systems of understanding in which we find ourselves. As I struggled with conceptualising this third facet, I wondered if it is best understood as a bifurcated season in which we often choose one of two potential pathways. Yet, I would hesitate to say that it is necessarily bifurcated; an integration of the two pathways is possible while being somewhat challenging to maintain. I will describe them, however, as two sub-facets that tend to be separate.

A) Revolution and Resistance. This sub-facet focuses on breaking free from a perceived systemic problem or limitation.

Lesson One – We take responsibility to resist evil and wrongdoing, often leaning toward either active or passive resistance or choosing between violent and non-violent ways to resist. We learn to discern the presence of evil, harm or destructiveness in ideas or in actions, in personal lives and in social systems.

Lesson Two – We begin to see what is not working in our primary constructions of reality – our first understandings of truth. We see the

connections between individual and systemic errors and wrongs. We break away from unhelpful narratives and question former interpretations.

Lesson Three – We find ways to tear down what is not working well, to deconstruct what is not helping. We face the tension between this deconstruction and the strains it places on our networks of relationships. If the tension is too much we might exchange one community for another, but we may prefer to tolerate the tension and bridge communities in spite of difference. We may head “into the wilderness” for a time, separating ourselves from any close community in order to detach more completely from the unhelpful patterns we are resisting.

Lesson Four – We counter the old by speaking or acting prophetically – boldly naming new interpretations, or symbolically or experimentally helping to build new alternatives. With others, we try to embody new ways and interact in new systems. Often such new communities struggle to find a new balance between critique and affirmation, since the critical mode has been so crucial for a season.

B) Imagination and Hope. While some respond to the brokenness of human culture with resistance, others have the ability to see hope and possibility in the midst of our messy world. Usually with an intuitive or disciplined spiritual insight, they envision alternative pathways that are not immediately obvious. When viewed from more conventional standpoints, these visions seem idealistic or fantastical when described, and miraculous when achieved.

There is a vulnerability to this hopeful envisioning of possibility that could threaten to crush those who set out more tentatively or timidly. Others imagine and hope with a resilience which has great strength, flexibility and creativity.

Lesson One – We open ourselves to unpredictable possibilities of healing and change. We consider trusting against apparent evidence, hoping when circumstances are discouraging. We find creativity in chaos and inspiration in compassionate solidarity with the poor and broken.

Lesson Two – We imagine and envision a new

world and seek ways to express it. We look for practical bridges between imagination and reality. We engage spiritual resources in ways that make a difference in the real world.

The tendency toward bifurcation of this facet is heightened when one’s focus is inward or protective. Possibilities of uniting both aspects are enhanced when built on empathy and solidarity with others; then radical faith and compassionate humanism can come together in powerful ways. The potential intensity of either pathway (probably most when combined) can be seen when there arises a willingness to sacrifice or even die for the sake of others or a better world. Getting Stuck (for A & B) – Despair or hopelessness may be the primary obstacle here. This can result from being overwhelmed at the immensity of all that is wrong or from early defeats in either pathway. Some personalities also find any questioning of the status quo a very anxious process and would rather not “rock the boat” limiting development in this facet.

One of the central spiritual questions is where we do (or don’t) see God in the process. If God is understood to be more a part of the problem, then theism may be scrapped in order to separate ourselves from all the wrong and violence for which the concept of God has stood. If, on the other hand, we see God as the voice calling us into the wilderness, then we meet God as if for the first time.

#### **4 - Mystery, Peace and Trust**

While much development in the other facets has to do with increased knowledge and mastery, of confident acting in the world, this fourth facet has more to do with not knowing and letting go. This is the facet that is founded on the acceptance of contradictions and paradoxes. In place of certainty and objectivity, there is living wisdom and trust.

Lesson One – We struggle with paradox and contradiction, seeking not a resolution or an “answer” but an acceptance of the tension or a narrative that makes sense of the lack of resolution. We come to terms with the limits of our understanding and the inevitability of times of failure. We let go of certainty or even the desire for certainty and learn to embrace and act on confidence instead. We get more comfortable



Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

with ideas and realities that are beyond what we can put into words.

Lesson Two – We can accept challenging and mysterious notions like the weakness or death of God as related to the infinitely creative love and resurrection of God. We can overcome denial and laziness and choose to see what is, staying present with eyes and ears open. We can accept the difficulty, pain and suffering of our existence and that of others and still see life as something full of a beauty worth celebrating.

Lesson Three – We continue to deepen our level of ultimate trust – related to but more than that which we experience in human relationships. We see a trust that is separate from either optimism or pessimism – that is not based on specific outcomes. Somehow everything matters and nothing matters.

Getting Stuck – The greatest challenge in developing this facet is a lack of courage to face the fears and anxieties that these lessons can cause. Many approach and then back away in spite of the fact that reality continues to make us hit up against the wall that makes avoiding this facet nearly impossible. Until a tolerance for the difficult emotions that accompany the pathway is developed (often learned through practices such as spiritual direction, contemplative prayer/reading, and/or meditation), people scurry back to certainty, to grasping one side of a paradox and simplistic beliefs that soothe with half-truths instead of giving us the courage to stand up in the truth.

### Conclusion

This model does not have the simplicity of structure that FTD or other stage theories possess, but it is my hope that the two complementary dimensions of increasing maturity and free-flowing, repeated seasons in which we highlight the four facets outlined above can provide a way of understanding spiritual development that may be truer to our varied and idiosyncratic experiences and which encourage a deeper appreciation and honouring of people with very different pathways of spiritual development.

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**Kevin Eames (USA)**

## **Comment to “The Mosaic of Maturing Spirituality. An Alternative Model for Spiritual Development”**



Professor Thiessen offers an intriguing model of developing spiritual maturity in his use of the mosaic metaphor. The model appears to be a creative encapsulation of what he has witnessed in his clinical and academic experience. The model does a fair job of addressing some of the challenges and complexities inherent in the development of faith-based maturity. As creative and interesting as the model appears, however, I respectfully offer reservations on two grounds. The first involves the worldview from which the article was written, and the second involves a explanatory incompatibility between Thiessen's critique of Fowler's model and his presentation of his own mosaic model.

My first overall reservation about Professor Thiessen's article is the worldview that provides the context for his model. It is unclear from the narrative if the mosaic is a singularly Christian model for understanding spiritual maturity. It appears, like Fowler's model, to allow for a variety of belief commitments, even those that are non-theistic. The language appears to be more appropriately associated with transpersonal psychology than Christian psychology. Some of the terms and phrases used would have very different meanings when viewed from each of these perspectives. A transpersonal perspective becomes more evident when the author asks the reader to accept his mosaic model on the basis of his own intuition, affected in part by his transcendent experiences.

The reliance on intuition highlights my second reservation, which involves a shift in the explanatory framework used in the presentation of the separate faith development models. Professor Thiessen begins his article with a brief

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critique of Fowler's well-known faith development model (1980). He identifies two specific concerns. The first involves the model's limitations for explaining real-life complexities. This critique is offered within an empirical explanatory framework. The issue of the invariant and hierarchical nature of Fowler's model is problematic and Thiessen appropriately supports this limitation with citations from Streib (2001) and Kaplan, Crockett and Tivlan (2014). So far so good. We are operating together within a conventional explanatory framework that marshals both theoretical and empirical evidence to support an argument.

The reader begins to note a shift in the explanatory approach when Thiessen introduces his second concern, namely the "tendency of the theory to appear elitist or even condescending when taught" (Thiessen, this volume). This concern appears to reside more with the teaching of the theory or the teachers of the theory rather than the theory itself. He contends that "we face

the embarrassing reality that those teaching on the stages of faith generally see themselves as operating largely in stage 5, conjunctive faith” (Thiessen, this volume). Pastorally, it would be of great concern to learn about spiritual maturity from someone who assumes themselves to be more mature. It is not wholly unlike the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14, where Jesus warns us “for all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humbles themselves will be exalted” (Luke 18:14, NIV). Unfortunately, we are not provided with any evidence to support Thiessen’s concern. As one of the two concerns Thiessen raises about Fowler’s model, this declarative assertion without any evidence signals the shift in rhetoric from an empirical framework to the author’s own intuition.

The lack of evidential support for elitism, a valid concern in itself, highlights my overall concern. As an introduction, he offers that the model results from “an intuitive response to a long career in Christian education and counselling” (Thiessen, this volume). This introduction makes explicit what was implicit in his elitism concern. While we are asked to consider the weaknesses of Fowler’s model using the traditional framework of empirical psychology, we are then asked to consider Thiessen’s own model using his intuition as an explanatory framework, albeit an intuition the author suggests is more than simply his subjective personal judgment. While Thiessen does allow that his model “has occasionally been inspired by and affirmed by readings about complex and dynamic systems” (Thiessen, this volume) from other authors and sources, these authors and sources are not cited in the presentation of the specifics of his model. The reader has no way of knowing which theoretical constructs come from which authors and whether those authors have empirical studies to support their arguments. Fowler augmented his model with interviews that provided qualitative support for his arguments. No such evidence is provided to support the mosaic model. We are asked to believe the author’s claims simply because he makes them. Would it not be intellectually honest to give Fowler’s model the same courtesy?

In the study of psychology, empirical research is preferred over intuition – even intuition that “can be understood within complex systems as one way in which new possibilities emerge from the multiplicity of previous understandings ... [or] be understood as a way in which one learns in conjunction with transcendent experience (Thiessen, this volume)” – because that intuition is the product of one individual’s experience. As Cozby and Bates (2013) note, “a problem with intuition is that numerous cognitive and motivational biases affect our perceptions” (p. 4), increasing the probability of inaccurate or flawed conclusions.

The rhetoric of intuition-as-evidence highlights a further problem. There are terms and phrases used throughout the narrative that are not operationalized. It is highly probable that terms like “spirituality,” “transcendence,” or “complexity with integrity” will be understood differently by readers bringing different assumptions to the narrative. Familiar psychological phrases are integrated with abstract spiritual language that is sometimes inspirational and sometimes inscrutable. While the mosaic model is ostensibly an alternative to Fowler’s stage theory of faith development, it is impossible to critique it using the principles of empirical psychology. It is a work fitting for the humanities, where judgments are not rendered on the basis of evidence but on such abstractions as elegance, creativity, or the synthesis of complementary ideas.

It is certainly true that there are multiple ways of knowing, many of which do not require evidence. Moreover, I in no way am disparaging Professor Thiessen’s narration of his own experience and how his descriptive model helps him to make sense of how he and others have matured spiritually. However, Thiessen’s critique of Fowler is founded on objections using empirical science. To abandon that explanatory framework and ask the reader to embrace a better model of faith development using an explanatory framework based exclusively on the author’s intuition is to ask the reader to compromise his or her own intellectual integrity. I am confident this was not the author’s intent, but it would be the consequence nonetheless.

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**K. Wojcieszek (Poland)**

## **Comment to “The Mosaic of Maturing Spirituality. An Alternative Model for Spiritual Development”**



When Werner May asked to give an opinion about the article by Walter Thiessen, “The Mosaic of Maturing Spirituality. An Alternative Model for Spiritual Development”, I was in some kind of trouble. With my poor English competence and no deep knowledge about human psychological development theories, it was really a challenge for me. After careful reading of the text, a general vision of Walter Thiessen’s proposal had slowly come to me. Moreover, it was necessary to know the Fowler model with which Thiessen started the discussion...

My first reflection was quite obvious: both models – Fowler’s and Thiessen’s – seemed to me typical psychological models of human development. It means that they are both built on the same epistemologic foundation and metaphysical base. Really, Fowler’s model has some limitations, as Thiessen says: it is “sequential, invariant, and hierarchical”. Despite that fact, this model was simple and really oriented towards some aim, some final result of the development, described by presenting personal ideals of mature human beings (“the God-grounded self”, Gandhi, Mother Theresa, MLK, for example). And it was as a kind of “religious shadow” of some other psychological models of human development, especially such popular ones

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as Piaget, Kohlberg and Ericson. The effort of Thiessen to surpass Fowler’s proposal, or rather develop it, seemed reasonable to me. And this is because Thiessen’s model is more elastic, more feasible in real conditions of human life. In Thiessen’s model, the human being has more possibilities of development, and we have more sub-models for interpretations of any case and life circumstances. So it seemed to be more flexible and useful instrument for therapists, for example.

But I can still see the same troublesome foundation in both Fowler’s and Thiessen’s proposals. What do I mean by this? As a philosopher, I have the tendency to compare psychological models with anthropological and I can see both models discussed as... similar.

They both start from the simple assumption that the human being develops with some internal and external forces, as biologically-understood

organisms. There is an idea of progress at the center of both models. In Thiessen's model, there are remarks about possibly getting stuck, but there is not so much place for the free will, as I see it. It is the rather optimistic imperative of organic development as such. So I feel that element to be more the heritage of the Enlightenment, characteristic of nearly all psychological approaches to human life. In Thiessen's model there is, as I said, more space for an eventual collapse of development ("getting stuck"). It has also a more flexible mosaic construction. The idea of four main "facets", phases ("lessons") and different results ("bifurcation") is of course more realistic than any rigid, sequential models. This is an obvious achievement of Thiessen's proposal in comparison with Fowler's model. But the achievement in flexibility is a loss of simplicity and intelligibility, in some aspects. Generally, in both models we rather assume development in a good direction. Hell does not exist!

As simple material for students of developmental psychology I would take rather Fowler's model, as material for the therapist or coach I would take rather Thiessen's model. But... after reflections on both models I am in trouble when I try to compare both models with traditional, classical knowledge about human spiritual development. In the theology of our internal life, mystic theology, we have two very important points which were too weakly accented in Thiessen's model (and Fowler's also). First of all, I cannot see the aspect of "metanoia" in either model. Many descriptions of especially spiritually developed human persons told us about one special point in which everything was different, the moment of conversion. That is the famous "tolle et lege" of Saint Augustine.

Another, perhaps more important absence is connected with old knowledge that all human spiritual development is based on God's initiative rather than on our human efforts. Our human efforts are necessary but inadequate. Life circumstances, internal difficulties are given by God as opportunities for development. Moreover, tradition says that at one critical moment a human being cannot develop proportionally for the final aim, understood as deification. Because of God's initiative and activity as our Teacher,

Master, Friend and Father we have problems such as "spiritual nights", "passive purification" and we should trust much more. God is our Master in development and the main force in it. The most important things in our spiritual life happen in a real relationship with God! After reading the article several times I could not find this perspective... The history of our life is the history of love and God's presence in our souls. Perhaps in the psychological developmental paradigm it is too difficult to take this into account? Perhaps the subject of Grace is too difficult for psychology?

So, Thiessen's model (and Fowler's even more!) is for me empty in that aspect, too universal. I understand that as such it is very useful as a psychological model (universal only when a clearly humanistic path of spirituality development is used), but is it possible to develop spiritually without God?

In our time we "have to be" universal, in accordance with the mainstream paradigm, but I see the old model as more true and useful.

It does not mean that the effort by Professor Thiessen was empty and useless. No, it is a very rich, flexible and impressive model, a real development in psychology, I would venture. But rather in psychology, not in the general understanding of the human being. Perhaps developmental psychology is too weak for a more realistic description? The presence of God and His action in human history is an especially important thing. In our culture we act as "lonely children of a non-existent God". Is it possible to have normal spiritual growth in such a cultural milieu?

Of course I suggest reading and studying this model carefully and taking it into account in thinking about our life. It is well done, really rich and impressive. It was for me a kind of intellectual pleasure to read this article. I could imagine the work of Professor Thiessen with his students and clients to be quite excellent! But some general reflections nevertheless came to me... Not about Professor Thiessen's excellent work, but about the situation of our cultural heritage...



Kingfisher

**Kelvin E. Mutter**

## **Mindfulness or The Peace of Christ**

### **Abstract**

The mainstream counselling community has embraced both Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) as well as other therapeutic approaches that incorporate mindfulness as empirically supported interventions. One consequence of this reality is that many practitioners assume that these are appropriate interventions for use with all clients. Indeed, reflections on clinical fit are generally missing from most discussions of mindfulness-based interventions. A second consequence of this reality is that the claim to empirical validity means that mindfulness-based interventions occupy a privileged position within the therapeutic community. As a result it is often assumed that good therapists employ mindfulness as a treatment intervention and that it is appropriate to use with all clients. This article utilizes the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to examine the religio-cultural fit of employing MBSR with clients who are devout Christians.

**Keywords:** Christian spirituality, integration of psychology and theology, mindfulness, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

### **Mindfulness or the Peace of Christ**

Although the wide-spread use of mindfulness techniques in clinical settings is often credited to the publication of *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990), some pastoral counsellors have used techniques such as rhythmic breathing, muscle relaxation, and visualization since at least the early 20th century (Holifield, 1983, p. 205; James, 1977, p.125). What makes the present situation different is an extensive body of research supporting the use of these practices and a widespread acceptance by the counselling professions of what are essentially spiritual practices. It is noted that whereas there is an acknowledgement of the limitations and potential negative impact of mindfulness-based interventions when clients present with certain mental health conditions such as active psychosis (Dobkin,



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Irving & Amar, 2012) very little has been written about whether the use of mindfulness techniques is a religio-cultural fit for religious clients. Instead, there is a tendency to address the question of religio-cultural fit by highlighting ways to employ mindfulness-based interventions that are sensitive to the beliefs, values and practices of the client (Hathaway & Tan, 2009; Meléndez, Cortés & Amaro, 2012; Symington & Symington, 2012). One thing that is missing from these discussions about religiously sensitive applications of mindfulness is a rigorous theological appraisal of the possible therapeutic fit when using mindfulness interventions with religious clients. This article seeks to address this gap through the use of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to explore the religio-cultural fit of employing MBSR with clients who are devout Christians.

### **Mindfulness-Based Practice**

An electronic search of PsychINFO yielded over 3000 peer-reviewed articles (1800 research studies) for which “mindfulness” was listed as a keyword and 217 peer-reviewed articles (163 research studies) for which “Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction” was listed as a keyword. Taken as a whole, the literature argues for the use of mindfulness-based practices in the treatment of psychosocial concerns such as anxiety, depression and trauma as well as an adjunct in the treatment of a variety of medical conditions (Goldin & Gross, 2010; Hazlett-Stevens, H., 2012; Matousek, Pruessner & Dobkin, 2011; Tacón, McComb, Caldera & Randolph, 2003; Zernicke et al., 2012). The key message from this research is that the use of meditation, mindfulness techniques, etc. is clinically associated with positive mental health outcomes.

The roots of mindfulness practice are linked to Buddhism (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) where the concept of mindfulness (i.e., *sati*) conveys an active mental state which results in a sense of awareness, attunement or acceptance (Gethin, 2011; Huxter, 2007). Within the counselling community, mindfulness has been defined as a moment-to-moment awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and “the process of keeping one’s mind in the present moment, while staying non-judgmentally detached from potentially destructive thoughts and feelings” (Symington & Symington, 2012, p. 71). The methods by which this state of mind is achieved in MBSR include the use of awareness of self and environment, body scan, breathing techniques, meditation, relaxation, visualization and yoga (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2001). Despite the fact that MBSR functions apart from the doctrinal context and moral framework that informs Buddhist meditation (Hickey, 2010; Huxter 2007), the history of mindfulness practice makes it difficult for some clients to shake its philosophical connection to Buddhism.

### **MBSR and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral**

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is a construct derived from John Wesley’s writings that describes his theological methodology (Thorsen, 1990). While Wesley believed Scripture to be the source of truth and the basis of what he taught, his

writings reveal a dynamic relationship between the four components of the quadrilateral, i.e., scripture, reason, tradition, and experience (Thorsen, 1990). The dynamic and multifactorial nature of the Wesleyan quadrilateral commends it as a tool for reflecting theologically on clinical practice. In light of the body of empirical research supporting this mode of therapeutic intervention as well as its experiential orientation, this discussion begins with a reflection on experience.

### **Experience**

Wesley differentiated between experiential (subjective) and experimental (empirical) knowledge; the former being derived from personal reflection on one’s personal life experience, the latter consisting of knowledge based on observable facts and phenomenon (Thorsen, 1990). It is of interest to this study that Wesley was at one point attracted to and later became disillusioned with approaches to the Christian life that advocate mystical experience mediated through the use of contemplation and meditation (Outler, 1964, pp. 46-47, 251-252). In time Wesley came to believe that a true Christian encounter with God is an objective rather than subjective experience that is confirmed by Scripture (Thorsen, 1990).

For Wesley, the value of empirical knowledge rested in its ability “to confirm scriptural truth and enhance biblical interpretation” (Thorsen, 1990, p. 216). Wesley may, therefore, have welcomed research that demonstrates the positive experiential effects of using Christian spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer because they lend support to the scripture’s testimony about experiencing the peace of God (Harris, Schoneman, & Carrera, 2005; Knabb, 2012; cf. Pss 42:5-6, 94:19; Isa 26:3; Matt 6:25-34; Phil 4:6-7; Col 3:15 New International Version).

One question that arises out of the research literature is whether the changes attributed to MBSR are a direct result of employing mindfulness techniques. On the one hand studies that support the use of MBSR are couched in tentative language that acknowledges the limitations of each study. In contrast, the non-research literature tends to portray mindfulness practice in a less nuanced manner and as a result

infers both the universal applicability of these interventions and attributes positive outcomes to the act of meditation itself (cf. Dixit, 2008; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Markway, 2014). In this way mindfulness practice is at times portrayed with the characteristics of a secular sacrament that brings wholeness to its practitioners and which is effective either *ex opere operato* (i.e., the benefit is derived on the basis of the action itself) or *ex opere operantis* (i.e. the benefit is derived as a result of the work of the doer). With this in mind it is worth noting that the common factors literature makes the case that therapeutic change is multifactorial and that clinical interventions play a minor role in the process of therapeutic change (Ahn & Wampold, 2001; Beutler, Forrester, Gallagher-Thompson, Thompson & Tomlins, 2012). When this observation is applied to mindfulness practice we are faced with the distinct possibility that any perceived benefit of mindfulness-based interventions is more likely to result from the mediating effects of client factors and/or the therapeutic relationship than the technique itself.

### **Tradition**

Wesley valued the historical heritage of Christian theological interpretation and would refer to the writings of the Fathers of the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic traditions as well as more recent authors as a means of supporting his interpretation of scripture (Outler, 1964; Thorsen, 1990). As a tool for analysis the Christian tradition supports two avenues for reflection on key assumptions, explicit and implicit, that inform the practice of MBSR.

First, Kabat-Zinn (1990, 2001) claims that mindfulness-based practice does not conflict with religious beliefs. This claim invites followers of Christ to first assess whether the goals of mindfulness practice, i.e., a sense of awareness, attunement or acceptance, are in keeping with the aims of Christian spirituality. With this in mind, it is important to consider the nature of Christian spiritual practices. Within Christianity spiritual practices may be divided into two streams, apophatic spirituality and kataphatic spirituality (McLeod, 1986; Stewart, 2001). Kataphatic spirituality employs thoughts or images with the intent of engaging reason, the will,

imagination, feelings and the senses to provoke spiritual awareness (McLeod, 1986). This form of Christian spirituality concerns itself with facilitating a person's sense of connection with God through meditating on what is known about themselves and God, e.g., the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola (St. Ignatius, 1964). Practices that support kataphatic spirituality include contemplative prayer, meditating on sacred texts, visualization, as well as meditating on one's sins, the passion of Christ or the attributes of God (Bidwell, 2004, 76-78, Blanton, 2002; Finley, 2004; Knabb, 2012; Nolasco, 2011; St. Ignatius, 1964). In contrast, apophatic spirituality is concerned with mystery, i.e., the unknowability of God, and focuses on the person's experience of divine reality apart from what is perceived through the five senses or theological understanding. Practices associated with apophatic spirituality include solitude, breathing exercises, the practice of hesychasm in the Orthodox tradition, and 'prayers' which are the unspoken and unformed groanings of the soul (The Cloud of Unknowing, 1985; Finley, 2004; Vlachos, 1994). Viewed as a whole it becomes evident that Kabatt-Zinn's assumption of a universal socio-religious fit between MBSR and diverse religious traditions fails to appreciate the fact that Christian spirituality is not merely concerned with the practitioner's existential experiences of awareness, attunement or acceptance but rather is focused on facilitating the person's awareness of themselves in relationship to God.

Secondly, there are those who acknowledge that where differences in belief exist that these may be incorporated into mindfulness practice, thus suggesting that MBSR may be a suitable host for the client's religious beliefs (Cole et al., 2012; Hathaway & Tan, 2009; Meléndez et al, 2012; Symington & Symington, 2012; Tan, 2011). Although correlational approaches to theological reflection are common within the fields of Pastoral and Christian Counselling the application of this methodology to the use of spiritual practices drawn from non-Christian traditions, and particularly the Eastern religions, has long been recognized as problematic (Chesterton, 1908; Gnoli, 1953). For example, Chesterton (1908) observed that two or more systems of



They left their nets

spiritual practice may exhibit the same machinery (i.e., practices) but differ greatly as to questions of meaning (ch. 8). This sentiment is also affirmed by Gnoli (1953) who noted the distinctly Christian nature of hesychasm when he wrote “apart from the undeniable phenomenological affinities with yoga, which should perhaps be sought in the common substratum of the human soul, hesychasm is indissolubly grafted on Christian dogma and inserted in the Christian atmosphere” (p. 100). Chesterton’s and Gnoli’s comments remind us that any perceived similarities between two or more different religions in the form of spiritual practice do not necessarily reflect the presence of similar values, beliefs or expectations.

Next, with respect to the meanings that differentiate Christian spirituality from MBSR it is noted that Christian spirituality is fundamentally Trinitarian in nature in that the God of the Christian scriptures is the focus of a person’s thoughts: i.e., God the Father is the transcendent lord of creation who desires to be in an intimate relationship with his creatures; Jesus Christ has made full and sufficient atonement for the sins of mankind; and, the Holy Spirit is the giver of life who renews and comforts us (cf. Chan, 1998, pp. 45-55; Finley, 2004). Thus Christian spirituality, including the spirituality of the mystical writers, seeks to promote the practitioner’s relationship with God (cf. *The cloud of unknowing*, 1985; Brother Lawrence, 1999; Chan, 1998; Finley, 2004; Foster, 1978; St. Ignatius, 1964; Vlachos, 1994). In contrast, the clinical use of meditation within MBSR is anthropocentric in that its use and focus emphasizes inner calm in the midst of life’s stresses, acceptance of one’s circumstances, and a reliance on the individual’s self-efficacy to employ mindfulness in a manner that supports their emotional well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2001). Another essential contrast between the worldview that informs MBSR and a Christian worldview is that MBSR considers the essential problems in living to be stress, anxiety, fear, and panic (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2001). Christianity on the other hand views humanity’s willful rejection of God (i.e., Sin) to be the essential problem in life and considers the challenges of stress, fear, and anxiety to be consequences of

the problem of sin (Gen 3:8ff; Deut 28:65; Anderson, 1982; Beck & Demarest, 2005; Coe & Hall, 2010). Thus a Christian perspective on stress, fear, and anxiety is that there are times when our experience of these emotional states is a result of our own acts of disobedience towards God (Anderson, 1982, p. 92; Beck & Demarest, 2005, p.241) and there are times when we experience these emotions as a consequence of the sinful acts of others (cf. Coe & Hall, 2010, pp. 293-294).

Finally, MBSR differs from Christian meditation in that they represent differing views on wholeness and the means by which this is achieved. Wholeness, within MBSR, is portrayed as a non-judgmental state of mind characterized by patience, receptivity to new possibilities, trust, relaxation, acceptance and a non-attachment to the things that preoccupy us; each of which are cultivated through the practice of meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Irrespective of whether it is the act of meditation itself that, *ex opere operato*, is believed to result in wholeness or whether it is the meditator who mediates, *ex opere operantis*, their own experience of wholeness through the practice of meditation, this view of wholeness stands in opposition to a Christian understanding of wholeness which is understood to be an act of divine regeneration of the person that begins with what Christians refer to as the new birth (1 Pet 1:3-9; Anderson, 1982; Beck & Demarest, 2005).

### Reason

John Wesley’s confidence in reason was based on his understanding of what it means for humans to have been made in the image of God (Thorsen, 1990). Specifically, he considered that reason is an essential aspect of our humanity; along with immortality, stewardship of the earth, and moral understanding (Thorsen, 1990, p. 170). Although Wesley held that human nature had been affected by humanity’s fall from grace he also believed that “humanity’s rational capabilities remain largely intact” (Thorsen, 1990, p. 170). It is further noted that while Wesley believed that there were limits to human reason he also believed that reason was useful to demonstrate the reasonableness of Christianity (Outler, 1964, pp. 394-396; Thorsen, 1990, pp.

174-176), to reflect on our sense perceptions (Thorsen, 1990, pp. 182-186) and to guide our understanding of Scripture (Thorsen, 1990, p. 196).

Two key lines of inquiry emerge when we engage reason to reflect on the use of mindfulness-based interventions in clinical practice. First, there is the fact that MBSR is a pragmatically-oriented phenomenological practice. This is seen in the empirical research on the efficacy of MBSR as well as in the way its practices are separated from spiritual values. Although the proponents of MBSR consider that the secular nature of MBSR makes its practices accessible to a wider population, the model has been critiqued by Buddhists as a culturally conditioned construct that so separates mindfulness from its religio-cultural milieu that the doctrinal, moral and communal nature of Buddhist practice is lost (Hickey, 2010; Huxter 2007). Equally significant, however, is the fact that the separation of practice from spiritual meaning reflects an anthropology that views human experience as the defining measure of significance. This stands in opposition to Christian anthropology which sees the person as an embodied social creature made in the image of God and who is embedded in community, history and tradition. Thus the separation of practice from spiritual meaning communicates to religiously devout clients that the spiritual values which are meaningful to them are of secondary importance if they wish to experience relief from anxiety or be better able to cope with stress.

One Christian response to the secular orientation of MBSR has been to re-contextualize its practices within a framework that takes its meaning from a Christian understanding of ultimacy: i.e., God's personhood, God's truth, God's purposes, and God's actions (Symington & Symington, 2012). A second response is to highlight how Christian spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer can facilitate a state of acceptance, presence of mind and/or internal observation (Blanton, 2002; Harris et al, 2005; Knabb, 2012). Both of these responses introduce the second line of reflection; namely, whether it is appropriate to place spirituality, and especially Christian spirituality, at the service of psychological well-being by making it a tool

of therapeutic practice. In other words, is it the function of either the spiritual life or God to serve as an adjunct to attaining mental health? For the Christian, there are at least three reasons for caution in this regard.

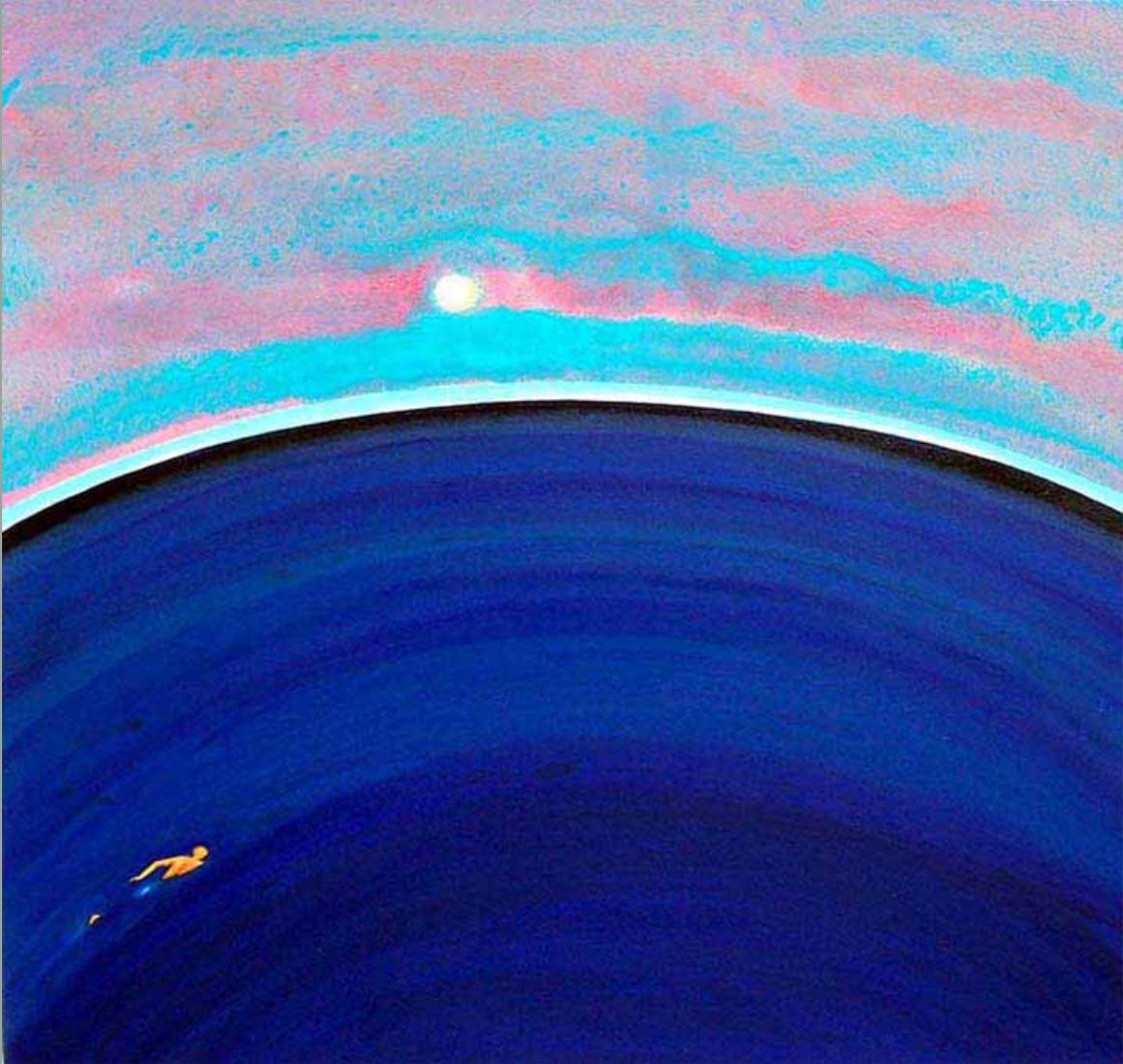
First, although the Christian spiritual tradition acknowledges that its practices can be beneficial to the practitioner's emotional well-being the ultimate goal of these practices is that the person experiences peace or oneness with God (Brother Lawrence, 1999, p.5; Finley, 2004). Along this line the "peace" of which the scriptures speak is not a subjective sense of well-being that comes as a result of a ritual practice but rather a sense of wholeness that comes as a result of a person's relationship with God (cf. Pss 42:5-6; Isa 26:3; Phil 4:6-7; Col 3:15).

Next, Christian writers differentiate between the means by which the goal is achieved (e.g., contemplation, meditation, practicing the presence of God, etc.) and the goal of practicing spiritual disciplines (Brother Lawrence, 1999, p.56; Cloud of Unknowing, 1985; Finley, 2004). Thus some Christian counselors, while identifying potential benefits to the use of the Christian spiritual disciplines in counselling settings, do not view the use of spiritual practices as mere counselling techniques but rather tools for facilitating spiritual maturation (Beck & Demarest, 2005, pp. 246-253; McMinn, 1996).

Third, Christian writers differentiate between human or selfish motives for engaging in spiritual practices and those which are spiritually minded (Brother Lawrence, 1999, p.56). On this point Wesley noted that his early approach to engaging the spiritual disciplines was a form of works righteousness which was built on his own efforts rather than experiencing righteousness through faith in Christ (Outler, 1964, pp. 62-66).

### **Scripture**

In this section the argument shifts away from utilizing the lenses of experience, tradition and reason to reflect on mindfulness practice and to employ scripture to reflect on the use of MBSR with Christian clients. This step is an essential aspect of Wesley's theological method as he considered that the Christian scriptures were the primary authority upon which to build



Swimming above the abyss

one's theology (Outler, 1964; Thorsen, 1990). An examination of the practice of mindfulness in light of scripture yields two important paths for reflection. The first involves an examination of what the scriptures have to say about the practice of meditation by studying biblical stories depicting situations where contemplative or meditative practice occurs. The second line of inquiry explores the experiential aspects of mindfulness practice (i.e., acceptance, anxiety, fear, inner peace and stress) in light of the biblical narrative.

In addition to those scriptures that specifically identify an individual as engaging in the act of meditation (e.g., Gen 24:63; Pss 4:4, 5:1, 19:14, 27:4, 39:3, 49:3, 63:6, 77:3, 6, 104:34), the bible describes events in the lives of some individuals that raise the possibility they may have been in a meditative state at the time of the incident that is described (Isa 6; Ezek 1; 2 Cor 12:2-4; Rev 1:9-3:22). While the brevity of the apostle Paul's story in 2 Corinthians makes it difficult to identify the exact nature of that experience, narratives from the lives of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the apostle John suggest that, rather than emptying their minds of what concerned them, these individuals were contemplating or meditating upon something that was of significance to themselves or God's people. In other words, these accounts describe situations where there was a specific referent for the practice of meditation. It is also noted that the psalms, many of which may be described as poems of meditation, provide important insights into the practice of meditation within ancient Israel. For example, the act of meditating began with a decision to remember God (Pss 42:4, 63:6, 77:11, 119:49-56, 81-83, 143:5). Next, the Psalms frequently mention a referent for the practice of meditation: e.g., God's nature and character (Pss 35:28, 48:9, 71:24), God's work of creation (Ps 19), God's presence in times of distress (Pss 46, 59), the acts of God (Pss 77:8, 12, 105:2, 145:5) and scripture (Ps 119, cf. Ps 1:2).

Next, when we consider what the scriptures say about the experiential aspects of mindfulness practice we note that the Biblical writers were not only aware of the adverse circumstances that can result in a state of mental or emotional distress they also looked to God to be the source

of relief (1 Sam 30: 6; 1 Chr 21:13; 2 Chr 33:12; Pss 18:6, 31:9, 55:17; Jonah 2:2). Thus whereas Kabat-Zinn (1990, pp. 333-348) describes the role of mindfulness in alleviating fear, panic and anxiety, the Christian scriptures speak of the comfort that comes from placing oneself into God's care (Pss 27:1, 94:19; Prov 29:25; Isa 41:10; Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7).

Taken as a whole, the biblical writers made God the focus of their meditations and understood that wholeness involves being aware of who we are in relationship to God and becoming reconciled to God. In other words, the lens of scripture highlights how the Christian scriptures define both the source of emotional wellness and the means whereby it is experienced.

### Conclusion

Hayes, Strosahl and Wilson's (2012) observation that the poor fit between the language of mindfulness and some clients is because "many clients follow fundamentalist religious traditions that are skeptical or even hostile towards anything that smacks of Eastern spirituality..." (p.218) only touches on the surface of the matter. Indeed, it is more to the point to state that there is an essential disconnect between the meaning constructs that underlie Christian spiritual practices and the meaning constructs that inform MBSR. While some may argue that this may not be of immediate concern when counselling someone who does not identify themselves as a Christian, the use of this methodology with self-identified Christians conflicts with fundamental Christian beliefs and values: e.g., the effect of Sin (the sin principle, our own sinful choices, and the sins of others) on our wellbeing; the definition of wholeness and the means whereby this is experienced; and, the purpose of engaging in spiritual practices. In addition, the anthropocentric and phenomenological nature of practices MBSR can either separate the Christian from focusing their thoughts on who they are in relationship to God or place them in a position of seeking to maintain a theistic orientation while engaging in practices that may feel foreign to them.

This study also points to the fact that the practice of Christian Psychology needs to involve more than a substitution of a theistic perspec-

tive or of Christian behaviors (e.g., contemplation, prayer, recitation of scripture, etc.) for behaviors which the client may perceive to be non-Christian in origin. Indeed, the history and theology of Christian spirituality, scripture and reason remind us that Christian spirituality is not to be practiced in a mechanistic or self-referential manner. Rather the focus of spiritual practice within Christian psychology is noumenal (i.e., God-oriented) rather than phenomenological and the purpose of these behaviors is to foster spiritual growth and the development in a person's relationship with God. It is when both the counselor and the client are able to keep this in mind that there is space for the peace of God to work in the heart and mind of the client (Phil 4:7).

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**Dana Wickers (USA)**

## **A Response to “Mindfulness or the Peace of Christ by Kelvin Mutter“**

Mutter has written a well thought out article regarding the use of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) with Christian clients. He makes an excellent point that empirical support of a technique is not enough to automatically recommend use with Christian clients but that the technique must also be evaluated to determine if it is consistent with Christian beliefs. He then points out several differences between the worldview that informs MBSR and resulting goals of MBSR and Christian belief. Kabat-Zinn the founder of MBSR describes the essential problems in living to be stress, anxiety, fear and panic (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2001). Mutter correctly points out that Christianity teaches that willful rejection of God is the essential problem of life and that stress, anxiety and fear to be a consequence of the problem of sin. Wholeness according to MBSR is a non-judgmental mind that allows the individual to be in the present and detached from destructive thoughts and feelings. A Christian understanding of wholeness is the divine regeneration of the person that begins at salvation. An additional point of disagreement is the focus of MBSR which is anthropocentric and relies on the individual's self-efficacy while Christian meditation is focused on God and our relationship with Him. Mutter makes a sound argument against using MBSR based on differing views of the problem of man and what constitutes wholeness.

However, just because MBSR has different goals and purposes, does that mean that Christians should not use any mindfulness techniques? Mutter cites Chesterton (1908) and Gnoli (1953) who both believed it problematic to use spiritual practices from non-Christian traditions even though the practices are similar due to differences in meaning. This is the key, one must be careful in what meaning is attributed



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to a technique. Mindfulness techniques should not be used as an end in themselves but as tools that supports goals that are in agreement with Christian values. There are several other therapeutic approaches that use mindfulness techniques, one, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, integrates mindfulness techniques with cognitive behavioral therapy. The reason for the use of mindfulness techniques is to calm the mind so that so that the individual can switch focus from unhealthy negative thoughts to healthy thoughts. Complete healing only comes through a relationship with Christ but the individual also has some responsibility. Paul admonishes us in 2 Corinthians 10:5 to take our thoughts captive or gain control of our thoughts so that our thinking will be in agreement with Christ. Many individuals who are experiencing anxiety and fear report that their thoughts seem to be spinning out of control and they feel like they are captives of their thoughts instead of the other way around. Psalm 46:10 tells us to “Be still, and know that I am God” (NIV). Mindfulness techniques can be used to still the mind and allow the person to have control over thoughts and focus. Then the person can practice meditation on God and his word. While mindfulness techniques may be helpful,

they may not be beneficial with all Christian clients and Mutter wisely cautions us against using these techniques with clients who would feel uncomfortable using them.

Mutter brings up another concern in his article and that is whether it is appropriate to use spiritual practices to increase psychological well-being. If that is the sole purpose the counselor introduces the spiritual practice then that is a concern; however, if the goal is to also assist the client in spiritual maturity, spiritual practices in counseling are appropriate. Client's motivation to practice spiritual disciplines may at times be more to relieve anxiety than spiritual growth but as they practice and encounter God, hearts can be changed.

The Christian counselor must evaluate techniques carefully and not adopt them just because there is empirical evidence that the techniques work. Mutter has shown how MBSR does not line up with Christian beliefs. However, MBSR does not represent everyone who uses mindfulness techniques. There are approaches that use mindfulness techniques in ways that are supportive of Christian values. The Christian counselor does not have to choose between mindfulness and the peace of Christ but instead understand the relationship between the two. Mindfulness is a tool that may be beneficial for clients as they gain control over their thoughts. The peace of God is transformative as it guards our hearts and minds (Phil 4:7).

**Sharon Habermann**

## **My Experiences as a Christian Working in Secular Public Health**

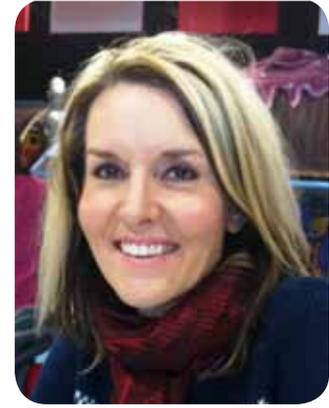
Across the past 15 years of my clinical practice, I have been privileged to work with hundreds of clients alongside other health professionals (e.g., physician specialists, physical therapists, nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, and other rehabilitation specialists) in the treatment of patients with complex chronic pain disorders. The multidisciplinary centre where I practice is publicly funded through the provincial government, and is part of the larger universal health-care system that is free to all Canadian citizens. This affords my patients the freedom of seeing me without financial burden, and affords me the freedom of providing psychological care that is guided by client need rather than ability to pay. I have found it to be a wonderful setting to practice.

I would probably best be described as a health and rehabilitation psychologist. I am also a Christian. I carry a strong conviction that my clinical work is not simply a job, but a vocational calling from God with a purpose grounded in promoting His kingdom on earth. Reflecting back on my experience as a counseling psychologist, I observe with interest my own personal and professional development, and how my identity as a Christian has been “lived out” with my clients in the process of my work. It is particularly interesting, at least to me, to observe how my faith has informed my practice because I work in a clearly secular context; public healthcare.

### **Background - Religion, Psychology, and Secular Healthcare**

The historical dissonance between psychology and religion is well documented. Over the past 25 years in particular, this dissonance has been replaced by curiosity and more openness among psychologists about the possible salutary benefits of religion and spirituality, and their

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potential role in the therapeutic endeavour. Research into the role of religion has resulted in the accumulation of ample evidence that religion and spirituality are associated with positive mental and physical health benefits (Miller & Kelley, 2005).

In contrast to psychology's initial hostility toward religion, the field of healthcare has long appreciated the positive health benefits of spirituality and religion. Indeed, current national healthcare accrediting bodies in both the United States and Canada require evidence that the spiritual and religious needs of patients are attended to in the provision of health services for accreditation to be granted (e.g., CCHSA, 2005; JCAHO, 2009). In other words, in order to get accredited, health service applicants need to show that they not only value spirituality and religion, but they actually integrate interventions that tend to the spiritual and religious needs of their patients. As a Christian, it is an exciting time to be a psychological healthcare provider! There is an openness to religion and spirituality that exists both within my discipline as psychologist, and in my role as a healthcare provider. I feel freedom to explore and attend

to the spiritual needs of my patients, and even integrate faith practices into therapy for those to whom this is ultimately therapeutic.

### **My Journey**

Fifteen years ago when I began my career as a novice clinician but a more seasoned Christian, I felt the acute need to be transparent with my clients about my Christian values at the outset of the counseling endeavour. I remember at length disclosing to my clients how counseling was not a value-free endeavour, where my own beliefs and values about what was right and true influenced my perception of client issues and problems, feedback given, and ultimately the treatment and therapy to follow. And, as a Christian, my beliefs and values were based in a Christian worldview. My disclosure in many ways felt like a confession; I wanted my clients to know my Christian worldview so that they could make an informed choice of whether or not they wanted to retain me as their counselor. Although somewhat secondary in purpose, I also viewed the counseling relationship as an opportunity to impact my clients with God's love and grace, hopefully embodied in me and my way of interacting with them. I would often pray for my clients before sessions, although I rarely shared with them that I did so.

I believe that the majority of my clients listened to my Christian disclosure with tolerance, and most often with indifference. Although important to me, the majority of my clients, being non-Christians, did not of course share my spiritual convictions nor have well-formed spiritual convictions of their own, at least that they could articulate or felt was relevant to their presenting problems.

I learned that although my faith values were an integral component of my own life and driving force behind the therapeutic endeavour, this was not a shared experience by my clients. I quickly realized that for the majority of my clients, my disclosure of my Christian values was actually not serving the purpose I had hoped, and ultimately was being done out of my own sense of conviction than actual client need. And with this realization, I stopped my uniform practice

of disclosing my Christian values and instead only reviewed the more basic and necessary information to obtain informed consent consistent with the standards of my profession.

Overall, I found that clients did not care so much about my Christian values and worldview underlying my therapeutic approach; rather, they more acutely cared about finding real help for their immediate presenting problems. This being said, there were a minority of clients for whom my disclosure served a significant positive purpose. These were clients who did have a strong Christian faith, and for them, the sharing of my Christian values at the outset of therapy was welcomed and in fact led to an immediate sense of relief and comfort for many of them; serving to lower their defenses that quickened the therapeutic work to follow. Often, there was a sense from these clients that my being a Christian, like them, was a sign of God's handiwork and orchestration in bringing them to me. This was clearly therapeutic.

So, how has this experience shaped my therapeutic approach? I no longer uniformly disclose my Christian values as part of the informed consent process, but I also have not abandoned sharing my Christian values when I feel it serves the best interests of my clients. I have several key, general questions regarding spirituality and religion in my assessment interview that are designed to reveal to me if spirituality, particularly a specific religious orientation such as Christianity, is relevant and important in to my clients. For those to whom it is relevant, I find myself open to sharing my Christian faith and values transparently the moment I sense this may benefit them. And it usually does. It often opens up conversation about spirituality that serves as a resource to better understand and cope with their problems.

Despite the encouragement to attend to the spiritual needs of clients that is advocated by accrediting bodies and my employer, and the psychological research evidence that supports the positive role of religion in mental and physical health, I have found that clients are nonetheless surprised about being asked about their spi-

rituality by a secular health psychologist. For those who hold a strong spiritual orientation, they welcome the opportunity to share how it plays a role in their life and coping with pain, or has been negatively affected by their pain experience. For example, just this past week I saw a client with chronic headache and brain injury, who, when asked about how her spirituality had been impacted by her condition, indicated with surprise that despite consulting countless health specialists for her health concerns over many years, she had never been asked about this very important aspect of her life. What ensued was a deeper conversation about how her health problems had contributed to a faith crisis that unfortunately had led to a withdrawal from her community of believers, but through which she had begun to explore a deeper relationship with God and His possible purpose in her life. I had the privilege of hearing her faith journey, and encourage her to continue this process.

In the field of chronic pain, I have found that for clients with a strong faith orientation, spirituality is a fundamental aspect of their coping with pain and its impact on their lives, and finding meaning and purpose within their suffering. This is particularly true when pain is severe and has led to significant functional limitations. For my Christian clients, Harold Koenig's (2003) handbook for coping with chronic pain from a Christian perspective, which is based in his own personal journey with pain, is a wonderful resource. It is one I often give to my Christian clients. Encouraging spiritual development and spiritual coping has been therapeutic for many. I personally have found it extremely fulfilling to practice psychology with the freedom to integrate my spiritual values into my practice when I feel it is appropriate for the patients I see. And, my fulfillment is in part due to the support and openness I experience from my health employer to actually do so. Indeed, I find it is an exciting and enriching season to be Christian psychologist in secular healthcare in the Canadian landscape.

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The Incredulity of the Disciples

**John Auxier**

## **On Teaching Forgiveness**

### **Introduction**

On a Saturday afternoon last April, at our institution's annual graduation ceremony, I found myself wondering why I no longer felt at home participating in the service. Over the past few years I must confess that I have felt a somewhat disconnected from the celebration around me at graduation. Some years I actually found myself running late for the event as if I was dragging my feet to go. Sitting on the platform or in the pews with my colleagues, I would dutifully step forward to fulfill my administrative role in the program, but it felt a bit empty. In the noisy lobby afterwards, with all the parents, friends and families joyously milling about, I might be introduced to a person or two, have my picture taken perhaps, but generally felt like a stranger in the crowd.

Reflecting upon this sense of estrangement this year, I realize that it probably relates to my shifting from being a fulltime faculty member/program director to my current split role as half-time Dean. When I was teaching fulltime, I was quite immersed in coaching and mentoring students, and championing our graduate counselling program. Every counselling graduate walking across the stage at those earlier graduations I had a meaningful connection with as a teacher-mentor.

Although I still teach, (both in the M.Div. and in the counselling programs), I no longer have students in their first semester when they are first being enculturated into graduate study, nor do I teach extensively in the curricular core, where professional formation assignments gave me insights into the personal stories of students. Where I used to teach more semester long classes, which afforded 12 weeks to build relationships, I now largely teach one week modular courses with limited contact hours. The net result is that often I can't remember student names by the time graduation rolls around. After all, I only have had them for a single class (or maybe two) in the course of their studies.



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All this was running through my mind at last spring's graduation, when I received a "gift" that reminded me of why I entered into teaching in the first place. In the lobby after the ceremonies, I had a number of encouraging exchanges with students about my teaching. One middle-aged Masters in Counselling graduate insisted on hauling me over to where her entire family was seated and publically recognizing my contribution to her success in the program. A young M.Div. graduate introduced me to his father, who was also a pastor. The student said, "I loved your pastoral counselling course, it was one of my favorites in my studies at ACTS". His father chimed in, "Your community resources notebook assignment was so good that I stole my son's to use in my ministry!". It had been a long time since I had heard such encouraging feedback on graduation day. It was food for my soul. But the most significant interaction I had that last April was from an M.Div. graduate named "Roy" [not his real name] who had taken my course on theological issues in counselling. I'd like to share Roy's story as a concluding case study to this essay.

In the body of this piece, I want to talk first about the culture of seminary education and our formation as those called to teach, then share my

own experiences developing a course on Forgiveness for counselling and pastoral students, and look at how common concerns in practical theology of student formation, academic mastery and pastoral/clinical skill acquisition play out. We will conclude by looking at impact from a seminary course that moved beyond the student into the church.

### **The culture of seminary education and formation of theological teachers**

Mary Hess and Stephen Brookfield (Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts, ed. Mary E. Hess and Stephen D. Brookfield 2008) recently indicated their belief that theological education is unique in its concern about the movement of the Holy Spirit and desire to engender personal qualities such as empathy and compassion in graduates. They go on to recommend to seminary faculty three approaches to support spiritual formation in their teaching: 1) continual researching our pedagogy, evaluating how our teaching is carrying out this important project; 2) honoring student experience in our classes by employing respectful teaching strategies; and 3) using teaching methods that create reflective engagement with the texts, peers and the teacher.

Respect for student experience is evidence in theological instruction by asking students to analyze texts in the light of their experiences (Hess & Brookfield, 2008). The meaning of the term “respect” is “to regard” or “to look again” with at others, implying perspective taking leading to regard. According to Hess & Brookfield it also means believing in student abilities to meet challenges arising from “disorienting dilemmas” they may encounter in our classrooms, which challenge their assumptions or present new lenses with which to view the world.

As a teacher in practical theology and counselling in a graduate theological school, I have to model my own willingness to wrestle with challenges in understanding and applying biblical teaching, theological concepts and behavioral science findings. Hess & Brookfield note:

*Before asking students to engage in any learning process that involves risk, discomfort, or challenge (things that always accompany thinking critically about faith, for example)*

*we need to model in front of them our own engagement with similar learning tasks. (Hess & Brookfield, 2008, pg. 13)*

Authenticity is the watchword among our students today. The emerging and emergent church has captured this quality in their attempts to reform Christian community and the meaning of Church. Yet in Christian higher education the process of becoming a respected academic is largely disconnected from what qualifies as “authenticity”. Success in the academy rewards diligent obsessive-compulsive workaholism, not reflective authenticity. In fact, in my own experience, being transparent about one’s opinions in graduate school was genuinely hazardous to finishing the program of study for several colleagues. Consequently, faculty like myself are in need of learning how to practice authenticity as teachers often with poor models to draw from our own experience. Hess & Brookfield comment:

*In an authentic pedagogy this mirror is one that students as well as the teacher can peer into so that the connections between the teacher’s inner ruminations and her external actions are made public knowledge. Students recognize teachers as authentic when those teachers are perceived to be allies in learning who are seen as trustworthy, open, and honest in their dealings with students. Colloquially students often say that such teachers “walk the talk,” “practice what they preach.” Have no “hidden agendas” and that with such teachers “what you see is what you get.” (Hess & Brookfield, 2008, pg. 14-15)*

My experience in the classroom confirms this. Students want to know if I really believe what I teach, or is what I talk about just my power position talking a party line. Do I have doubts about my theology? What ideas do I struggle with most? How do I live out what I believe? How have I changed what I believe over time as the result of both theological reflection and life experience? What difference does Christian doctrine make for pastoral care, or Christian counselling? Can psychological research help pastors and therapists to relinquish bitterness and bring grace and freedom to parishioners? Is this incompatible with the Word of God.



Jesus Condemned

Does this stuff work? Will it work for me?

There are many ways to be an authentic person as a theological educator. One way authenticity is displayed by an instructor is by sharing one's own struggles living out the Gospel. Hess & Brookfield (2008) use the metaphor of the theological educator as a river guide, bringing students through the rapids and pools of their subject matter as an experienced companion on the journey.

Discussion-based teaching has been noted as one of the most important critical learning methods used in theological education (Brookfield, 2008), and plays a major role in this writer's classes.

*"...all are teachers in some way, just as all are learners—we all "know as we are known." Indeed, the fundamental task of a teacher in this kind of process is to get out of the way sufficiently to allow learners to engage the central topic." (Hess, 2008:53)*

### **History of the course**

"Theological Issues in Counseling" was a course originally designed to give seminary students enrolled in our counseling program an overview of theological themes that typically underlie client problems. (It should be noted that it is a 3 semester hour course out of a 20 semester hour Biblical/Theological required cluster, which includes basic theology, spiritual formation and Biblical Studies.) Up until this point, the course had been a survey course, with special emphasis on integrating the Imago Dei and the doctrine of sanctification. I was frustrated with the syllabus as it seemed to be too broad, and with the theology text books I was using as they seemed too disconnected from application in pastoral care and professional practice. In 2000 I attended the AAMFT Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado. The American Associates for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) is the leading professional organization for Marriage and Family therapists in North America. Among the workshops I attended there was one on "Forgiveness after Extramarital Affairs", by Fredrick Di Blasio, a Christian Professor of Social Work at the University of Maryland. This was my introduction to the thriving field of forgiveness research. I was immediately hooked: here was

a topic that connected to central tenets of Christian faith, being empirically explored and clinically applied.

The course was redesigned to make Forgiveness its main theological topic, reconceptualized more as an interactive seminar where in-depth treatment of a particular topic becomes a means of explaining a larger subject area. Gradually I have developed a course which includes a mixture of readings, papers, journals and class assignments that centre on the rich topic of forgiveness theologically and psychologically.

Like most instructors I struggle with questions of how much material to cover, (after all the course still tries to be broader than just forgiveness), how much reading is sufficient to ground students in the subject matter, and since the course is offered as a one week modular, how much pre-course work is realistic to expect students to do prior to the intensive classroom experience? The course has evolved over time on these questions.

Some of the changes that have occurred include:

- Reducing lecture time. Students are capable learners and have good texts they are expected to analyze.
- More reflective journaling assignments relating to spiritual and professional formation.
- Using guided discussion in class to help students develop critical thinking, create a sense of ownership for their own learning, and to facilitate learning from one another as well as from the formal texts.
- Focusing on a single subject area (forgiveness) and going deeper rather than trying to skate over the gamut of theological issues relating to counselling.
- Employing guest speakers who also dialogue with students about their own forgiveness journeys, as well as exposing the class to films such as "The Straight Story" and "Magnolia" illustrating forgiveness process.

Jacobson (2008:80) comments that "A more robust way of being a teacher may be to slow the pace at which students are being bombarded with information and instead structure lear-

ning experiences that require students to own the material, to make mental adjustments, to be transformed.”

### **Seminary: Abbey, Academy or Apostolate?**

David Tiede, former president of Luther Seminary once described the historic development of his institutions as marked by three phases. Initially, as an “abbey”, the school primarily was connected to and serving the church or a place of separated-out study, piety and preparation for ministry. Eventually, the seminary moved into a second stage, that of an “academy”, adopting the values and goals of higher education. The audience of the abbey is the church and God, the audience of the academy is the community of scholarship and research and credentialing bodies like ATS. The third phase in a seminary’s development is that of an apostolate. As an apostolic ministry, seminaries re-emphasize their missional calling to propagate the Gospel in the Church and society.

Daniel Aleshire (2008) notes that Tiede’s scheme is really not about discrete historical stages of development, but about multiple identities seminaries possess: “... change resembles new growth: new rings are added without discarding the old ones. Tiede’s abbey, academy and apostolate are, in some ways sequential stages of institutional identity, but unlike truly sequential stages, they represent layers of identity and practice that never completely disappear.” (Aleshire 2008: pg. 126)

I would suggest that a seminary course, such as mine also can serve multiple functions as an abbey, academy and apostolate in microcosm. (Although all identities are present in a given course, some classes may emphasize one of these identities over the others. So for example, a course on spiritual formation will include academic readings and an acceptable syllabus, and may have some Gospel connectivity in a given assignment, but will privately be serving the pietistic and churchly goals of the abbey. Similarly, an MTS may emphasize the academic preparation for Ph.D. studies and have a more limited connection with the church and missions.) Abbey, academy and apostolate in THS 648:

### **Theological Issues in Counselling**

Theological Issues in Counselling probably most identifies with the abbey role, followed by the academy and the apostolate. The strong emphasis on personal transformation through case studies, testimonies and theological reflection is actually pietist. The critical interaction with theological readings and research literature on forgiveness lines up well with the academy. Finally the missional denomination derives from both the subject matter (forgiveness is central to the Gospel) and the academic program the course is embedded in (graduate degrees in Marriage & Family Therapy).

### **Teaching Forgiveness as an Academic Subject**

One teacher at Luther Seminary who has taught a seminary course on forgiveness has state:

*“This course has provided a complex picture of forgiveness, and it is clear that forgiveness is not a subject that can be approached lightly or glibly. It cannot be demanded or commanded...” This complexity, and the need for a patient, organic process that it implies, is true of both forgiveness and of community trust building. –a student in a forgiveness course taught at Luther seminary. (Ramsey, 2008, pg. 137)*

What are the academic touchstones that students seem to take away from this course about forgiveness?

1. The centrality of forgiveness to Christian faith. Martin Marty (1998) has remarked that the word forgiveness sums up the conceptual heart of Christianity, a distinctive focus that sets the Church apart from all other religions. It permeates Christian life and practice, suffusing baptism, the Lord’s Supper and holy living; and is grounded in the Trinitarian nature of the forgiving God.
2. The topic of forgiveness opens doors into the systematic and organic connectivity of Christian belief. Exploring scriptural admonitions, parables and narrative accounts of forgiveness, and reading and Leroy Jones’ *Embodying Forgiveness* as a core theological text, students discover how interpersonal forgiveness connects

to other vital Christian doctrines and themes, such as sanctification, soteriology, grace, repentance and the doctrine of God, and the problem of evil. It is a window into the “big story” of God’s redemptive program.

3. They gain an appreciation of potential weaknesses of the Christian understanding of forgiveness, pitfalls and blank spots in our theology and practice. They have to consider Bonehoffer’s critique of “cheap grace”, look full in the face of abuse of Christian forgiveness in the scandals of clergy sexual exploitation of children in Roman Catholic circles and the enablement of domestic violence in Evangelical churches. In both cases abuse of the innocent has often been swept under the rug in the name of forgiveness without reference to meaningful repentance and justice. One student noted:

*“I realize that “cheap grace” has abounded in my own life and ministry. A grace without judgment. Living life in-between the bookends of the already-not-yet-Kingdom of God has created a kind of apathy. It’s almost as though the sentiment is such that – in this period of grace – I have misunderstood grace for a lack of intent to judge. It’s not that God has a lack of intent to judge, but rather, He has judged – and His judgment is grace. Ultimately, this judgment of grace compels one to repent out of gratitude for God’s judgment.” (S.H.)*

4. Finally, students learn about Christian forgiveness when they have to encounter other approaches to addressing interpersonal wrongs, such as restorative justice and Jewish tradition. In one assignment students stage a mock debate in class comparing Jewish and Christian conceptions of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. The Jewish tradition is very clear that only victims can forgive their perpetrators, and then only are obligated to do so when repentance is evident. This stands in sharp contrast to Christian teaching relating to forgiving on behalf of others and the possibility of unilateral forgiveness even without repentance. Here they learn about another faith’s approach to repentance and reconciliation, helping them to appreciate what is unique about the teachings of Jesus but also the importance of taking repentance more seriously in the church.

### **Teaching Forgiveness and Spiritual Formation**

Theological education is viewed by seminary teachers as unique in its emphasis on formation, especially in two areas: 1) engendering a spiritual awakening and 2) fostering the growth of pastoral qualities of empathy, compassion and love (Brookfield & Hess, 2008).

Peter Cha (2008) summarizes the need for seminaries to intentionally support spiritual formation among their students.

*“In the past, when students came to seminary having been “formed” in their Christian homes and local congregations, being immersed in seminary life may have sufficiently reinforced their spiritual formation journey; in such a context, seminaries may not have felt the need to develop specific programs explicitly for their student’s formation. Given the needs of today’s students, however, many seminaries are recognizing that formation by osmosis and other passive approaches no longer serve their students well. Seminaries need to find ways to invite their students to participate in well-designed formation experiences that prepare them for their future ministries. (Peter Cha, 2008. pg. 35)*

Ramsey talks about her experience team teaching a course on forgiveness at one mid-western seminary:

*Most fundamentally, we trusted (and spoke of this explicitly) that the Holy Spirit would be present in this course – as we and the students read, watched videos, and participated in conversations in and outside of class. We were, after all, dealing with the dark topics of individual brokenness and systemic evil; we needed to cast our fears on God. We recognized as well that the forgiveness and healing we were attempting to understand more fully could only be embodied through trust in God. For this reason, we spoke often of the “impossibility” of human forgiveness and contrasted it to the forgiveness that occurs when persons who are broken cooperate with god and work to heal the world. (Ramsey, 2008, pg. 122)*

### **Formational learning from the study of forgiveness**

Students learn not only develop an academic knowledge and acquire pastoral/clinical skills to further forgiveness process, but also are encouraged to use the class readings and assignments to help them explore their own unforgiveness issues as part of spiritual and professional formation. A pastor or a counsellor who has not dealt with bitterness or reconciliation issues in his/her own life will not be very effective in understanding and assisting parishioners/clients with their struggles. The class attempts in several ways to do this.

1. Engaging the student in devotional theological reflection about God's call to forgive in their own lives. Using Henri Nouwen's *The Return of the Prodigal* as a devotional exemplar, the class comes to grip in particular with the meaning of forgiveness as expressed in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15).

2. Employing a research-based forgiveness model (Christian psychologist Everett Worthington's REACH model), students carry out a reflective workbook assignment that walks them through their own forgiveness issues. I believe this helps students experientially encounter the complexities of resolving interpersonal sin and move towards healing. Since forgiveness processing involves the use of empathy, compassion, perspective taking, the practice of exercises which engender these skills/traits in the students, which help prepare them for ministry.

3. Students report they are strongly impacted by the testimonies of guest speakers, who share their forgiveness struggles with the class. The past classes have included testimonies of forgiveness from a woman whose brother attempted to kill her family and was serving a life sentence for successfully murdering their mother; a former anti-terrorist police officer from Northern Ireland who was raised to hate Roman Catholics who talks about forgiveness and reconciliation between people groups; and a former pastor who had an affair which devastated his family and church. In dialog with these authen-

tic witnesses to forgiveness, students encounter the reality of sin, trauma, grace and freedom. They discover that if God can heal this person of their wounds, then perhaps my own are not beyond repairing; they also see people openly talking about how forgiveness is not complete in their lives, modeling that grace may take time to take hold and that the process of sanctification is often about incremental transformation, not overnight change.

4. The last class of the course concludes with a communion service, centered upon God's forgiveness for his people through the Cross of Christ, and our response to grace as a community of the forgiven and forgiving. Students not only engage in worship and the Lord's Supper at this time, but also dialogue and pray together for their own journeys of forgiveness.

Comments made in papers by my own students, reflecting the spiritual and professional formation outcomes:

*I was struck by Jones' interpretation of Mary's reaction when she finds that Jesus' body is not in the tomb. Jesus was the one who affirmed Mary of her humanity. His death brought a loss of hope and also a loss of her sense of identity. When she hears the risen Jesus call her name, she finds her identity once more. She is the one who has been forgiven, loved, and given life, by her God. [Here she quotes Jones' *Embodying Forgiveness*] "But she cannot cling to her past relationship with Jesus; she must go forward and embody her new life in mission to others" (130). This story reminded me of the importance of, not only receiving God's love for me, but also allowing my identity to be shaped by Him. If I am to truly live in his image, I must live in communion, self-giving communion, with my brothers and sisters. (L.W.)*

*I loved Barth's notion of finding signs of forgiveness throughout creation. The line of sacred and secular used to be more clearly demarcated. Part of me wonders, "Are the moments of forgiveness and beauty that I am noticing around me with greater frequency actually signs that I am unwittingly growing in my embodiment of forgiveness?" (P.E.)*



Nazareth

### Teaching Forgiveness as a Pastoral/Professional Skill

In terms of pastoral and clinical practice, students often gain key insights in several areas:

1. Forgiveness is both a decision and a process. “Decisional forgiveness” plays a role in most models of forgiveness in the research literature, although some emphasize it more than others. At some point for a person to overcome bitterness they need to decide they want to forgive, an existential and biblical act of faith. This is helpful for both my pastoral and counselling students to recognize.

2. The scientific study of forgiveness is specifying the bio-psycho-social-spiritual impact of unresolved bitterness, the more healthful outcomes of practicing grace and extending forgiveness in interpersonal relationships, and articulating practical cognitive and emotional strategies that seem to underlie successful forgiveness. This convergence of Biblical teaching and empirical findings strengthens student’s confidence in faith and practice, and stimulates interest in pursuing research interests in the area of forgiveness.

3. Course readings in the psychological research literature also raise critical questions about how data from general revelation (behavioral science findings in this case) relates/does not relate to data from special revelation (chiefly the Bible). This furthers student development of the integration of faith and professional practice for counselling students, and gives pastoral studies students a practical understanding of how to help people trapped in unforgiveness, using both theological and clinical insights.

*One student noted: “If forgiveness simply remains learned behavior then it somehow is void of divine power and mandate. It is difficult to imagine the Spirit included in a purely humanistic act. On the other hand, it is also clear that forgiveness is not only an action that is performed by Christians. It is a God-given trait perhaps, but it falls under the doctrine of common grace, all humanity has been granted the power to forgive”.* (M.M.)

4. Students also discover that serious forgiveness is a process. Forgiveness is mandated for believers (cf. the Lord’s prayer), but the timetable is not. Sometimes there are very good reasons to withhold forgiveness. To rush into forgiveness too quickly can sometimes enable an unrepentant offender to do greater evil. If forgiveness has been granted only to satisfy social pressure from well-meaning family or the church, it can be a superficial exercise that leaves the victimized person feeling guilty about their unresolved anger and hurt. Respecting the need to let people be in process with forgiveness, is a vital part of helping them to move forward in obedience to Jesus’ command to forgive.

5. In addition, in this course students also have to grapple with how congruent is the concept of therapeutic forgiveness, (roughly defined as forgiving in order to relieve oneself of the negative symptoms of bitterness), and forgiveness enjoined by Jesus? Some theologians have suggested that therapeutic forgiveness has serious deficiencies (cf. Jones, 1995 for an example). To what extent are these criticisms valid or off the mark, is a question particularly important to create healthy discomfort among counselling students who are seeking to be integrative Christian professionals.

One student was compelled to contrast the humanistic approach common in her field of counselling and Biblical witness regarding the triune God:

*I could not help but think of my recent Satir training in line with a few of Jones’ assertions regarding the self. On page 76, Jones, taking the example of Unforgiven, [a Clint Eastwood film with forgiveness themes] asserts that the capacity that each of us have to destroy and do evil shows that there is no stable self that can be presumed to be fundamentally good or fundamentally evil; rather “our selves are battlefields in which we can never claim complete control.” Obviously, Satir and other humanist philosophies argue that there is a true, stable, congruent self, filled with positive life energy, that works for transformational change, and is, ultimately, good. What a different approach than what Jones is advocating – nothing said about a larger narrative of*

*a Triune God from whom we learn communion, relation, grace and love. (D.V.F.)*

### **Case Study: Roy's Story**

Returning to the scene of last year's graduation, the most meaningful interaction I had was with a graduate named "Roy" [not his real name]. He spotted me wandering around in the reception area where refreshments were being served, and insisted that I sit at his table with his parents and senior pastor. Somewhat to my surprise, Roy introduced me to them both and then proceeded to talk about the personal significance of the course he had completed with me his last semester. Here is his story, much of which was not known to me until that day.

Roy had waited until his last year in seminary to take his most of his practical theology courses. He found himself very much enjoying his class in pastoral counselling, particularly the use of case studies and pastoral formation assignments which caused him to reflect more deeply on how his family of origin and Asian cultural heritage had influenced his assumptions about life and ministry. In his last semester he decided to take my course on theological issues in counseling, which focused upon forgiveness.

As the class unfolded, Roy found himself personally affected by the readings, journal assignments, speakers, papers and discussions. He realized that his church, family and even his marriage was wrapped up in issues profoundly related to unfinished forgiveness business.

Roy's wife "Tina" [not her real name] had been a staff member in a Christian organization where she had been subject to sexual harassment by the agency's executive director. This individual had propositioned her and attempted to manipulate her into a sexual relationship, which she rebuffed. When she reported this behavior to the organization's board, the executive director denied her allegations and attacked her character and credibility. She was quickly fired from this ministry and subsequently lost many close friends who were taken in by false rumours circulated to discredit her in the local Christian community. Tina eventually had to leave the

state where she was living to restart her life, where she met Ray and later married. In addition to his wife's ongoing mistrust of leadership in the Church due to this traumatic experience, Ray himself was understandably angry at both the organization and the executive director involved.

He journaled at one point during the course regarding a reading assignment:

*"I put this chapter off for a while, partly because I knew it would address some of my own issues and some real events that Tina and I are working through right now. Last week she heard from a family friend that the pastor who had made unwanted sexual advances towards her was fired from the church for other offenses against other women. His wife is filing for divorce. There are allegations of sexual misconduct, where he abused his power and trust. His wife is pressing charges of assault against him for violence. Tina feels vindicated, in a way, because she was demonized by the church when she left two years ago.*

*When I heard the news of what this man was up to, I was livid and indignant. I really thought that this man should be taken out, that someone just needs to smack him around a little. He works mostly with teens and college students who are international students, away from family and friends. So, he's picking up on the defenseless. Some of the things Tina tells us about make me sick. And I want to respond violently. I want to smack him around a little. Or a lot. It makes me even more mad to know that he's now in [name of a city in the Midwest] doing fundraising and spreading lies about his wife. Sometimes I feel as if the sins of this man justify my anger, aggression, and violent intent towards him. And so I didn't want to read this chapter.*

*This chapter forces me to conclude that there are no easy divisions between good guys and bad guys. Munny [a character in Clint Eastwood's film "Unforgiven"] is right, "We all have it coming." Maybe my violent reaction is an attempt to deny that I have it coming too, that I am a rotten sinner as well. But my self-righteousness doesn't want me to go there. This chapter makes me realize that*

*while I can pronounce the word “forgiveness” and talk about it so much in the church, I really don’t know the depths of it in terms of theology and understanding, and in practice I’m even poorer. What I have gleaned from the book I now realize: that forgiveness is a craft to be embodied in my life as I follow Christ as a part of His Body. I want to learn this craft. I realize that I’m so poor at it. And I need a teacher, a master who will lead me. I understand Christ is my master, but perhaps its time I also bring these issues to my spiritual director.” --Roy*

A second forgiveness situation related to problems in Roy’s home church, a well-established ethnic congregation, where he was also serving as an intern. Several years prior there was a controversy in the church that had left a legacy of bitterness and hurt. A beloved Associate Pastor had been fired, at the behest of a small faction on the church board, who disliked his personal style and approach to ministry. The decision had been orchestrated in secret without normal consultation with the entire board or the congregation, leaving many members angry and hurt. Roy’s father was on the board at the time and was a supporter of the Associate Pastor. At a climatic congregational meeting about this decision, lines were drawn and harsh words spoken on both sides. In a culture that places a high value on respect, saving face and unity, this was a serious rift. The Associate Pastor was terminated, but the congregation had fractured and resentments abounded. Some families left the church. Eventually, some of those who had pushed the pastor out the door wrote a letter of apology to the congregation for acting in a high-handed manner, and a new senior pastor came, who helped the church to heal. But the wounds still remained for many, including Roy’s family. Although Roy did not take the course with the specific intent of working on these issues, he soon realized that the readings, papers and journal assignments were forcing him to consider how to bring healing to his family and church.

On these painful issues of the church split, Roy journaled:

*“Forgiveness is learned and lived in the context of community and for the community, particularly the Body of Christ. Sometimes at church the way forgiveness is understood is never bring up or talk about the past. Yet I know that this is not forgiveness either. It’s probably denial more than reconciliation. And so as I read, I hope that my community can be reconciled and healed. This is a deep hope, a place in my heart where hurt and hopeful joy both reside. I want us to know the power of Christ, of his death and resurrection, of forgiveness for the purpose of restoration of communion and reconciliation of brokenness. (“Roy”)*

As I sat with Roy’s family and pastor after graduation, the pastor and Roy’s father then began to describe the story of their church, and how although they appeared unified there were some deep hurts lingering from past problems that needed mending, the circumstances I recounted above but was not fully aware of during the course. To my surprise, the pastor related that he was requiring his church leadership team to read Leroy Jones’ *Embodying Forgiveness*, (1995), the fairly heavy theological text we had used in my course and concluded, with Roy and his father chiming in, by asking if I would consider speaking to their church board on the topic of forgiveness at their annual board retreat. This I eventually did, covering biblical passages on forgiveness, a meditation exercise on Rembrandt’s famous picture “Return of the Prodigal”, personal testimony about forgiveness process in my own life and a description of the key steps to relinquishing bitterness and embracing forgiveness. The retreat culminated in sharing a common meal and communion service. No formal evaluation was taken of the impact on participants, however, indications from the pastor were supportive. Furthermore, a month later this writer received an invitation to address the members of this ethnic family of churches to speak on the topic of “Reconciliation between cultures and generations”, a real honor to make a forgiveness related contribution to larger issues of relationships between first and second generation ministries, that sprang out of the seeds planted in a young student’s own journey of forgiveness in a seminary class.

## Conclusion

As a seminary educator and lifelong learner, I gain valuable insights from my students about what forgiveness means in specific situations, enfleshing the theological and behavioral science insights in practice or the struggle of practice, including both critique of and affirmation of knowledge in the field. In addition, I also have used the course to explore my own forgiveness journey and foster my own personal development and formation as a teacher, husband, and Christian leader. I am humbled by the wisdom I gain about the craft and calling of teaching from my students.

Daniel Aleshire, Executive Director of ATS, has recently written:

*“Teaching has a significant impact on students. More than half of the ATS member schools participate in the ATS Graduating Student Questionnaire, and while responses to some questions vary, graduating students respond to one question almost exactly the same, year after year. When asked to identify the most influential aspect of their theological education, among fifteen choices, the first choice is always the faculty.” (Aleshire, 2008. pg. 68)*

This is a charge to myself and we who call ourselves seminary teachers, that we would be worthy of that influence we have been entrusted with, and that through our graduates we might indeed bless the Church.

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## Inspired by Christian Psychology: Psychological Students of the Providence Theological Seminary Meet Former Articles of the e-Journal 5.

Providence Theological Seminary is an evangelical institution in Otterburne, Manitoba, Canada, whose purpose is to serve the Church, in the accomplishment of its mission, by preparing and supporting leaders, developing resources, and facilitating theological reflection. The Seminary is both evangelical and interdenominational offering certificates, masters and doctoral level programs in traditional classroom format, courses, and through online education. Graduate programs focus on preparing students for Church, counselling, educational, global and academic ministries. The Master of Arts in Counselling and Counselling Psychology degree programs are distinct in their integration of a theologically-informed worldview and modern psychological knowledge. Through the counselling program students gain the knowledge, confidence, and competency to integrate critically their Christian world view with mainstream counselling theories and practi-

ces to effectively counsel individuals, families, couples, and groups. The counselling program's objective is to thoroughly equip individuals to confidently and competently integrate their Christian faith with professional standards and practices.

### **This was the task for the students:**

Please select from the articles in e-Journal 5, pages 11-107, one which most inspires you.

<http://www.emcapp.ignis.de/5>

Describe (2 pages) why this article inspires you and what further thoughts you have about it.

### **And here are four responses.**

Thank you very much to the authors!

And thank you too to Sharon Habermann for coordinating these responses

**If you want read the articles please click on the titles.**

### **Heidi Dirks**

## **Response to “The Framework for Counselling from an Evangelical Perspective” by Shannon Wolf**

The task of integrating personal faith into one's vocation can be difficult, forcing people to wrestle with many questions about how to honor and obey God in their particular situation. I acknowledge that such integration can be difficult, and may look different for each individual. The image of Christian counselling being on a continuum speaks to God's creativity in calling individuals to serve Him in different ways.

I appreciate Shannon Wolf's discussion of how Christian therapists can begin the task of integrating their Christian worldview into their healing work as therapists. This discussion is very important for therapists, as it increases their awareness of their own beliefs and values, which helps address the potential of harmful counter-

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transference with clients. It also helps therapists clearly explain their therapeutic approach to clients who are seeking specific treatments related to Christian worldviews.

The broader discussion regarding how to integrate faith and psychology, as well as faith and vocation, inspires me. I have faced these questions over the last several years, and through reading, discussions with wise friends and mentors, as well as my own discernment, I have begun to settle into a comfortable place where I can live out my faith authentically in all areas of my life. One of my professors spoke about our task being to discern what God is doing, and then join in with His work. This discernment and engagement with God's work applies to all aspects of my life, not just my professional vocation. I am called to do this as a friend, teacher, daughter, sister, leader and student. I can also do this whether or not I label myself a "Christian" therapist.

The term "Christian" can carry different meanings for individual people, as well as societies and cultures. It may also bring positive or negative connotations, possibly creating transference for a client. For example, Canada is scarred by the legacy of Residential Schools, where Aboriginal children were placed, often forcibly, by the government into schools run by churches. These schools sought to assimilate the children into White European culture, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse were rampant. As a Christian, I am grieved that such harm was done to others by people, especially

by who represented God. As opportunities arise, I want to join in with the work God is doing in the lives of people who were harmed by Residential Schools and their aftermath. God's work of healing is not contingent on the outward label of "Christian" being applied to those who are helping.

I agree with Wolf's statement that attempting to separate a therapist's relationship with God and their work as a therapist creates dissonance. While such separation is not needed, and likely not possible, it is important for therapists to reflect on their worldview and how it is manifested in their lives. This will hopefully help therapists to decide where they can best serve God, such as in a pastoral counsellor role, spiritual director, Christian therapist, or a therapist who is a Christian but does not use a "Christian" label. Each of these areas provides different amounts of freedom to speak about God, based on the services provided and applicable codes of ethics. Being clear with clients about what services are provided gives them the information they need to make a decision regarding treatment providers.

It is exciting for me to see God at work in the world, bringing hope and healing to those who are hurting. As a therapist, I hope God will use me to bring His hope and healing, and I trust that He will honor my desire to be His hands and feet in whatever job to which He calls me, regardless of whether I am called a Christian therapist.

**Kristy Korten**

## **Response to a "A Christian Psychologist and Biblical Counsellor" by Ed Welch**

Am I biblical counsellor? A question evoked by Ed Welch who presented on the topic of biblical counselling through his own experiences. His writing was inspirational and challenging for a Christian about to be finishing her Masters in Counselling and needing to decide what title to operate under in the professional field. After reading Ed Welch's article, I believe I am a bib-

lical counsellor and yet prior to reading, I identified myself as a holistic counsellor; focusing on all aspects of a person including their spirituality. In what follows, I will explore Welch's description of biblical counselling and how I maintain a counselling identity that is reflective of God's word, though not advertising as a biblical counsellor.

Welch begins by identifying the guiding theology for Christian counsellors. At the risk of sounding simplistic; he describes it as humanity's need for relationship; knowing and being known. The impact of this, in the counselling room, as Welch describes is, "the process of growth and change becomes more collaborative and less formulaic." (Welch, 2014, p.67) I agree with Welch, counselling should come out of an understanding of the human need for relationship. Research has continually shown that a strong therapeutic relationship is one of the most effective components to positive change in counselling (Duncan, Miller, Wampold & Hubble, 2010). It is through relationship that we establish a greater identity of self. Furthermore, as we gain a greater understanding of who we are, we begin to have a greater understanding of our self in relationship with the others, nature and the universe. Thus the process of knowing and being known presents a contingent relationship.

Biblical counselling, according to Welch, conceptualizes illness through physical and moral factors. While I affirm empowerment and responsibility for one's own state, I do not convict on sinful behaviours within the counselling room. Furthermore conceptualizing physical and moral culpability for an illness is a tight rope to walk on, and often is difficult to determine the role each plays. Even more difficult is addressing moral culpability and physical problems in concepts that are apropos to the client, requiring a sensitive awareness. However, Welch's discussion on emotions as an image of the soul continues to show the need for holistic care:

Our emotions usually proceed from our heart, are given shape by our body, reflect the quality of our relationships, bear the etchings of both goodness and the meaningless of work, provide a peek into how we fare in spiritual battle, and express the lies or truth we believe about God. (Welch, 2014, p.71)

Therefore, as a biblical counsellor our understanding of emotions is linked not only to the body or the soul but also to spirituality, regardless of the level of faith.

Am I a biblical counsellor? Yes, in that my theology of knowing and being known impacts my

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therapeutic techniques and that I pursue holistic care including spiritual, physical, emotional and cognitive considerations. Yet, I am not a biblical counsellor in that I do not limit my clients to those who are already comfortable or aware of the theological concepts of the Bible. Furthermore, I do not share my self-identity as a Christian as a biblical counsellor would. It is not that I think this is wrong, in contrast I think there is a great need for this. However, I also believe there is a great need for biblical counselling within the secular world, after all Jesus called us to be in the world, not of it. It is crucial for my work as a Christian to follow the example of Jesus. For that reason Ed Welch's article on biblical counselling is challenging and inspiring for my own professional journey of being an unacknowledged "biblical counsellor".

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**Carissa Muth**

## **Response to “The Roles of Automatic and Conscious Thought in Worldview Consistency” by C.E. Jones**

While I would like to imagine life to be simple and predicable, both experience and now science has shown me otherwise. Change, a fundamental aspect of life, is the epitome of such complexity where a concept basic in its description- the act of becoming different- is discovered to involve an elusive depth. In his article considering the empirical study of sanctification, C. Eric Jones (2014) proposes and confirms the hypothesis that a changed mind involves not simply the decision to change but the ability to integrate a thought pattern into an implicit memory. Rather than simply presenting sanctification and change as choice, instead Jones links it with neuroscience providing evidence that in order to become instinctive, change must move past the conscious mind.

Change, in the field of counselling psychology, is more than simply an encouraging phrase. In many ways it is the focus of sessions, the purpose of the entire field of study. While researching neuroscience and social phenomenon is beneficial, without the application to the lives of the individual, it is futile. Clients come to sessions with their hope rooted in the possibility of change and improvement. In considering sanctification as connected to not only the mind but also how the mind changes, Jones (2014) links the purpose of counselling psychology with the growing field of neuroscience research.

With further understanding of the brain, research has been able to develop psychological concepts within a biological framework. Jones (2014) captures this demonstrating that cognition is not enough for addressing concepts that popular theories such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy have attributed as maladaptive thoughts. While he does affirm the place of cognitive therapies, Jones broadens the topic and explores the partnership between choosing to change and the process of change, which invol-

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ves the alteration of the brain.

In his work on the brain, Daniel Siegel (2012) emphasizes the necessity of integration for wholeness and the need for communication between both sides of the brain. Implicit memory stored in the limbic and subcortical regions of the brain regulate not just instinctual memory but also can contain the emotions and experiences of trauma (Cozolino, 2010). Without the involvement of the neocortical conscious memory traumatic experiences are left out of context and fragmented (Cozolino, 2010). However, when the implicit is brought forward by considering emotion and given the context of the conscious, integration and healing can occur (Siegel, 2012).

In the context of sanctification and change, bringing forth the emotion contained in a loving relationship with God elicits the implicit and offers the motivation necessary to consistently practice a conscious worldview and see a progressive movement towards change. This goes beyond simply rote application of one worldview over another and attempts to entice the emotional and cognitive aspects of the brain, which in a healthy mind, are linked in the process of decision making (Cozolino, 2010). With integration then, there must be a connection between emotional and cognitive memory. In order to move a worldview from explicit to implicit, it seems to me, motivation to choose to follow a Christian worldview must also be implicit and driven by an emotional attachment to God. Only then will the change not only occur but be lasting.

In his article on change and sanctification, Jones (2014), effectively demonstrates the need for a Christian worldview to be a component of conscious choice in order to eventually become instinctive. As Jones demonstrates the need for practice in order for a worldview to become implicit, he brings forth the complexity of change and various aspects of neurosciences that help to understand why change is a process and not an immediate solution. With this, Jones also opens the door to further considering the neuroscience of change and, from a counselling psychology perspective, what additional factors might be necessary in order to expedite change and client's healing. This to me is a most inspiring concept.

**Laura Vander Velden**

## **Response to “Babel of Rationalities: Christian Psychology, Incommensurability, and the Important Role of Empirical Research” by Paul J. Watson**

Dr. Paul J. Watson's article, *Babel of Rationalities: Christian Psychology, Incommensurability, and the Important Role of Empirical Research*, discusses the profound influence of modern and postmodern philosophy upon every discipline of study, with particular interest placed on its implications for contemporary psychological research. His eagerness to engage in this interdisciplinary dialogue is noteworthy and commendable. As a student of both theology and psychology, my major research has much to do with the development of philosophical and epistemological structures in the modern West. In light of this, I found Dr. Watson's article to be stimulating and encouraging on multiple levels. For my understanding of both psychology and theology, methodological considerations are paramount, since they are the basis upon which we build and develop every discipline, and they reflect the underlying assumptions we have about the nature of reality. Both theology and psychology have become deeply intertwined

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with the philosophy of modernity; while theology has struggled for centuries to come to grips with modern philosophy and its disenchanting effect on our culture, the field of psychology is much younger and has only been developed during the modern period, meaning that it is highly influenced by and even founded upon modern principles.

Historically, as Watson notes, the humanistic rationalism of modernity and the advances made in science have led to vast development in the West, but large-scale violence has consistently been the unfortunate handmaiden of this development. It has been long acknowledged that the supposed 'objective' strength of rationalist humanism is not only ineffective in preventing societal violence, but it is also unable to deliver the objective foundation for knowledge that it promised. In Watson's words, "achievement of a truly objective social life could occur only with an infinite regress of justifications for all proposed foundations, which of course is a logical

impossibility” (Kaufman, 1974; Watson, 2014). When modern philosophers began to realize that their rationalist truth claims were in fact no different than any of the earlier authority claims of religious or ideological truth claims in the sense that they are all ultimately based upon the same breed of unverifiable subjective assumptions about reality, modern philosophy began a slow process of implosion, and it has in some measure been replaced by the radical critiques which began its downfall. These critiques have often been identified as “post-modern” philosophy; the once proud and optimistic spirit of modernity has fallen, and its replacement thus far has been the skeptical and deconstructive spirit of postmodernity.

Many have felt threatened by the loss of certainty and security that came with the fall of modernity, and they have also balked at the advent of postmodern deconstructionism, partly because it is notoriously suspicious of any truth system and can easily lead towards nihilism. However, while postmodern critiques are highly damaging to modern thought, they have unexpectedly allowed for a unique re-opening of space for metaphysical thinking and theology; the benefit of deconstructing modern foundationalism and recognizing the epistemological limitations of human finitude is that we all, as limited beings, must choose and commit to a worldview based ultimately upon faith and not empirical certainty. The implications of this are significant, and while Christian theology has struggled for centuries, attempting to claim space for itself in an increasingly secular culture which highly favors empirical objectivity, the advent of postmodern philosophy and its unveiling of ineradicable human subjectivity means that the potential, if not the actuality, of space for metaphysics and theology has been found again. As Watson notes in his article, since the myth of a superior and objective reason has been dismantled, it can no longer effectively dismantle Christian truth claims in the way it once thought itself capable (Watson, 2014).

Both Christian theologians and Christian psychologists may benefit from this turn, if we are wise in our efforts. A universal objective reason may not exist, but it has tentatively been replaced with the notion that there are a mul-

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tinuing student in the MA Counseling degree at PTS. Although her home base is in Calgary, Alberta, she is also currently writing a dissertation for her Ph.D in Theology at Wycliffe College (University of Toronto). Her research is primarily in the area of theological method, and her intent in both theology and psychology to teach, research, and counsel with an awareness not only of the complexity of human creatures, but also the complexity of cultural development and its impact on individuals and communities.

titude of observable rationalities governing the social world in different contexts. Thus, similar to the biblical story about the multiplicity of languages at Babel, we have in the postmodern age a multiplicity of rationalities. However, while this provides space for the Christian worldview, it results in great difficulty as various “rationalities” inevitably interact with and relate to one another. With no queen bee to govern our claims, the challenge of communicating between rationalities is substantial; the result of multiple rationalities in one culture could easily result in a ghettoizing of many small sub-cultures, including multiple Christian sub-cultures. However, Watson suggests the possibility of a creative solution. The import of his willingness to engage in inter-disciplinary discussion is shown here, since he suggests that perhaps the empirical research of psychologists has the potential to be one of many bridges between the gaps of various rationalities. For example, empirical psychological research may have something to say that would assist in substan-

tiating Christian understanding (or potentially negating certain understandings). Conversely, Christian tradition may at times provide insight into the findings of empirical research. In other words, even though the two fields may be speaking different dialects, eliminating the “trump” card of so-called objective reason may lead us toward greater collaboration and dialogue amidst various rationalities. Watson is effectively claiming some space not only for Christian theology, but also empirical research in psychology, and while there are numerous difficulties involved with the thought of practi-

cally living in such a diverse and uncertain cultural context, I think there is potential for good. The postmodern concept of multiple rationalities brings with it great threat and the potential for significant imbalances in the absence of an agreed upon universal standard, but it also brings great potential for renewed dialogue both within and outside of the Christian church. We have a difficult and uncertain road to walk, but it is lined with hope and always, we believe, undergirded by the faithfulness of God, who remains infinitely greater and wiser than our “Babel of Rationalities.”

Jackie Stinton

## A Reflection. The Practice of Contemplative Prayer from an Evangelical Perspective: a Seeking and a Yearning

### Abstract

This reflection on contemplative prayer practices in an evangelical setting emerged from a personal spiritual journey, one lived within a respected evangelical tradition, yet awakened into a deeper spiritual journey and the discovery of contemplative prayer practices. The desire to bring the richness of these into greater awareness for others led to a survey on the understanding and practice of contemplative prayer in this setting, with the anticipation that participants' responses would inform of relevant and valuable ways of nurturing engagement with contemplative prayer practices.

The survey questions included ones on the definition, meaning, experience and objections to contemplative practices. The limitations of the small sample were acknowledged, yet value lay in the heartfelt responses of the participants. Reflection on these responses pointed to meaningful ways of bringing contemplative practices into greater awareness and accessibility within the evangelical church, as a means of enriching both personal and communal spiritual life.

### Contemplative Journey

This reflection will first express my own journey to a stance and experience of contemplative prayer, as I have emerged from my evangelical tradition. A tradition I value much of and respect, including the godly men and women who lived out their faith in God in life-bringing and God-revering ways. And, a tradition that limited me in my exposure to and understanding of spiritual contemplative practices and the deep Mystery of God.

Perhaps that is my own sense of contemplative prayer - touching, embracing the deep Myste-

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framework that seeks to be attentive to both psychological dynamics and spiritual dimensions of human experience. As a psychologist and spiritual director, she believes that we are human beings on a spiritual journey and spiritual beings on a human journey. Jackie's beliefs reflect her Christian faith, but she has a deep respect for the journeys of those of any faith or none. She works alongside each person to uncover authentic self-understanding and cultivate compassion and inner resources through the personal challenges of their journey into deeper meaning and greater wholeness.

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ry of God, meeting Trinity in the deep silence, immersed without shape or form in his mystery and re-emerging moved and touched in the inner depths, depths known to me as well as those yet unknown. In this sacred inner place of stillness and silence, God makes himself known to me as I am able to fathom and experience him. God in me in all his profoundness, innerness, inmostness and Being.

I did not know about contemplative practices until I was called into my own deeper spiritual journey. A steady state believer, one who 'invited Jesus into my heart' at age 8, who never doubted the existence of God and his investment in her life, who quietly lived out of her level of faith, who drew closer to God in times of challenge, and then returned contentedly to her state of faith complacency. I did not enter into my own spiritual depths because I had no road map, no guide, and actually, no full understanding of the depths within nor how to access them in a spiritual sense. Working as a psychologist and having the perspective of respect and

compassion for the human spirit, I have always honored the journey of the spirit and soul. But not until I embarked - was called - into my own deep spiritual journey did the fullness, mystery, radiance, and vulnerability of the human spirit - mine as well as others - become more apparent, more human, and more spiritual.

The starting point of my deeper journey was the clear, distinct, and acute recognition in a liminal moment that my soul did not pant after God (Psalm 42:1). With that sheering awareness came the quickening of my soul - it was awakened. In that very moment, I knew it was the call of the Spirit to me. With increasing openness and gratitude to Trinity - more than can be articulated - I followed the newly awakened longing in my soul, felt and exulted in its keen urgency, its unassailable yearning, its call beyond to where God was waiting for me in the darkness, in the depths. In my depths.

The journey I embarked on was rich, profound, puzzling, stretching, uncertain, unknown, delightful, awe inspiring. One gift along the way was encountering the practice of contemplative prayer. The prayers of acknowledging God in his darkness, God in his mystery, God in his depths meeting me in mine. Unknown but known. Untouchable but embraced. Undefined but formed. Unseen but encountered.

My lived experience of the spiritual resources to be found in contemplative prayer, and the paucity of contemplative experiences I found acknowledged or offered within many evangelical circles, sparked my desire to bring it into the evangelical church body I belonged to. This led to designing and facilitating a class on prayer, which introduced teachings on prayer and experiences of various forms of prayer including *lectio divina* and its component of contemplative prayer (*contemplatio*).

Without judgment, I believe the small enrollment itself spoke to several potential factors: a complacency in the faith journey, a disinterest in or distrust of the unfamiliar, a lack of knowledge or limited perspective of prayer forms, perhaps a more general spiritual malaise. However, those who did engage in the class brought to contemplative prayer open spirits, perplexed minds, a reticence to enter into dialogue about their experiences which might have come from

a reflectiveness or as yet unformed thoughts, a cautiousness out of the perception that perhaps this practice did not 'fit' their experience or their confines of evangelical understanding and teaching. These responses were themselves a helpful and compassion-generating understanding of barriers to contemplative prayer practices, but only strengthened my desire to offer a space for seeking and finding God in contemplative ways within the evangelical church.

### **Contemplative Study**

My intent was to provide a grounding of themes gathered from a survey of evangelicals who were relatively unfamiliar with contemplative practice. My purpose was to understand their experiences, draw inferences about what might open hearts and minds to the practice, offer meaningful opportunities to engage in it, and invite communal experiences of learning and accompanying each other along the Way. The responses to the survey questions would be the catalyst for further personal reflection and communal discussion, as we together endeavored to bring the great spiritual treasure of contemplative prayer and practices to those new to it.

Ten participants were chosen, all known to me, ranging in age from 50 to 89, four males and six females. A disparate group in their own right as God-followers, the respondents included an 89 year church matriarch of missionary background, a seasoned missionary in theological training overseas, a pastor's wife and administrative personnel, a business strategist and executive coach, a geophysicist, a website designer, a medical doctor, and a professor of education who had served as a pastor. Faith backgrounds included evangelicals of Mennonite roots, evangelicals of a non-denominational community church with Plymouth Brethren roots, evangelicals returning to Catholic roots, evangelicals who had embraced the Anglican church, and a disenchanted evangelical seeking other ways of 'truth.' Acknowledged are the limitations of the sample and sampling process, as well as the notable lack of participants from younger generations. However, the participants were felt to adequately represent a microcosm of many evangelical church settings.



Freedom

The letter of request for participation in the study was as follows:

"I would like to discover the experience and effect of contemplative prayer on those from a more evangelical tradition, who may or may not have had teaching or exposure to it in their faith background. I am interested in their experience, particularly how they came into learning about contemplative tradition, and the use they make of it. My intent is to use what I learn from your responses to more adequately inform me of ways to bring the practice of contemplative prayer to those who may not be familiar with it or who might resist the practice or meaning of it.

I am looking for your honest responses, recognizing that each of us have our own intimate connection with God, and have differing understanding and experiences with contemplative practice. I will value the range of responses and have no preconceived notions of what or how I would like you to respond. Your honest and personal responses in any form will be helpful to me. I have deliberately chosen a variety of people to respond to this, in order to gather as many different experiences as I can. If you are willing to engage with me in this way, these are my questions."

The open-ended and non-presumptive questions presented, illustrative responses given, and interpretation of these responses follow. Obviously, my own spiritual experiences and understandings will influence the interpretation I have placed on these responses.

### **Contemplative Survey: Questions and Responses**

1. What is your definition of contemplative prayer, or, what is your understanding of it?

Although aware that there were potentially many definitions that could be 'googled,' nearly all the respondents stated their difficulty or uncertainty in personally defining contemplative prayer. Most offered a description rather than a definition including "contemplative prayer is a thinking person's first choice in prayer", "is not petitionary, praise-filled or to serve a utilitarian purpose ... it has no goal other than itself ... to

be thinkingly in prayer", "thoughtful ... mindful prayer", "using our minds to be open to God", "taking time to let an image of God or from the Scripture quietly sink into one's being without clothing it with petitions or 'noise.'" One person apologized dejectedly for her self-perceived inability to express in words her limited experience with contemplative prayer, yet sent a photo that perhaps captures much of it: the background was a view across and into a spectacular and vast mountain range bounded by the horizon and an open sky; the foreground carried a small sign saying, "DON'T READ. DON'T TALK. NO PHOTOS. JUST LOOK ... AND SEE."

A focus on "quiet listening" was evident, "listening rather than asking", "seeking God (in) intentional listening", "listening for Him to speak to your heart", and "being open to hear His voice." Important was the stance of "stillness before God ... resting in His presence", "silence", "focusing on God", in bringing "deep awareness of God, Son, and Holy Spirit."

There appeared to be a perception of the tentative nature of God's response: "waiting patiently in case God himself might wish to let one become aware of a thought from Him", "to listen in the hope of experiencing a time of intimacy with the Creator." A sense conveyed of a desire for connection but an uncertainty in the likelihood of this outcome; perhaps a sense that there was to be an expected outcome rather than a time of 'just' being in the presence of God, of bringing their presence into his Presence.

Notable was the primary focus of the offered definitions on thinking and the use of the mind, that for most, contemplative prayer involved some form of thinking rather than not thinking, on "intentional prayer" rather than on reciprocal or 'receptive prayer'. Only one used the words of "relational' prayer", one mentioned "heart prayer" while offering no definition of it, and another "listening for Him to speak to your heart." Is this focus perhaps a function of the emphasis in our tradition on intellectual understanding, is it a lack of awareness or experience with prayer from the heart, a fear of 'feelings' versus 'knowledge,' an embedded sense of the mind rather than the heart carrying Truth? Does this point to the distinction between kno-

wing about God and knowing God? It raised a question about the perhaps now less used but familiar phrase of relationship with Jesus being about asking 'Jesus into your heart.' Once there, what happens? Does the relationship then become more one of 'God in your mind?' Does this potential distinction point to the need on the part of spiritual leaders to speak to the variant yet equally worthy preferences of congregants for both head and heart knowledge? For doctrine as well as experience? To bring the fullness and wholeness of the Godhead through both heart and head awareness? The Godhead itself representing fullness, completeness, wholeness.

2. How did you learn about contemplative prayer? Are you involved in ongoing learning experiences, or connected with others who practice it?

The path to learning about contemplative prayer took many routes: returning to "my roots and traditions" of the Catholic church; having "various Catholic friends"; "reading" - again from primarily a Catholic tradition but also from an article in an evangelical journal; and an "introduction to lectio divina in a Sunday adult elective class." One spoke of her experiences while traveling as a young adult, and "randomly" arriving at an ashram led by Bede Griffiths, where she sat under his teaching and participated in a form of contemplative prayer. On her further travels, she lived at L'Arche Switzerland, where she became part of a contemplative prayer group led by Mrs. Vanier. In hindsight she recognized the profound effect these unique experiences had on her prayer life at the time, but ruefully stated that only recently has she once again recognized their significance and begun to use contemplative practices.

Sadly, the majority of participants were not involved in any ongoing practice of contemplative prayer, nor were they connected to others who did. One stated that he did not practice much prayer with others because he found prayer within evangelical prayer times typically consisted or petitional prayer rather than "prayer for its own sake ... i.e. to be in prayer."

From these responses there appears to be a need to encourage individual and communal practi-

ces in many forms of prayer and to open possibilities to do so. Supportive and shared exploration and experiences of various prayer forms would surely lead to a more vibrant, soulful, and transformed prayer life, and would meet the individual preferences and needs to engage in a prayer-full relationship with Trinity.

3. What is your personal experience of contemplative prayer, e.g., if you practice it, how long you have practiced it, how often you engage in it, how you use contemplative prayer, what challenges you experience, do you have any personal experiences in contemplative prayer you wish to share, etc.?

The responses to this question validated the original intent of the study - to explore the understanding and experience of contemplative prayer in an evangelical setting. The major theme arising from the responses was one of limited experience, limited practice, and disappointment in the experience which in itself limited the practice.

Knowledge of and some experience with other forms of prayer practice were offered, including "praying the Scripture text", awareness of "centering prayer" although not engaging in it, lectio divina, use of the Lectionary and liturgy, as well as acknowledgment that "just as there are various forms of prayer, God can also speak to you in various ways - through scripture, music, nature and people."

No one recounted a personal experience in contemplative prayer. Challenges to it were described as a "long struggle with a personal prayer life ... in part because I always felt the conversation was one way - me talking to God; there was seldom any listening"; "lives that are busy, noisy and chaotic ... so it is challenging to quiet your mind and simply be open to God"; the (ever present) "stumbling blocks of setting aside time and finding a quiet place to be with God ... I haven't made it the priority I should"; and that, "at first it is difficult because all you feel you are doing is constantly quieting your mind", with the hope that, "as with any discipline, the more you do it, the easier it should become to be still and quiet before God."

A suggestion for a "catalyst to set in motion" a

reflective or contemplative stance was to read poetry, with the observation that “poets who know that certainty is really a problem, that the unknown and uncertain are the best lived experiences for humans to be in ... (that there is) no need to be in contemplative prayer if one has eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and has it all figured out.” Inherent in this observation is the allusion to Mystery and ‘unknowing’, for many in evangelical circles a lost, discounted, or unfamiliar abstraction.

Again, the limitations expressed in these responses verify the need for opportunities to encounter and explore the gift of contemplative prayer practice. And, to become more acquainted with the meaning and experience of it, rather than merely the conceptual awareness of it. Depth, mystery, being, unknowing, presence, union, etc., are concepts of great value to be explored, experienced, comprehended, valued, sought, and held sacred.

The wistful and honest responses given point to the potential richness in communal dialogue of experiences and challenges in one’s prayer life, particularly in relationship to experiencing and entering into God’s presence in a contemplative way.

#### 4. What is the meaning of contemplative prayer to you?

Perhaps this question was not specific enough or was redundant to Question #1 which asked for the definition of contemplative prayer. Curious to the writer was that most responses made no differentiation between ‘definition’ and ‘meaning’. My intent was to have the meaning, i.e., the more experiential aspect of contemplative prayer, differentiated from the definition or more conceptual knowledge of its form. To make a distinction between a description and an encounter, an objective practice and a subjective experience, a head knowledge and a heart knowledge. This unaddressed difference speaks perhaps to the lack of clarity of the question, the limited exposure to contemplative practices, or my own distinctions between the practice and the experience. However, I see the distinction between definition and meaning as a journey from head to heart knowledge, from conceptu-

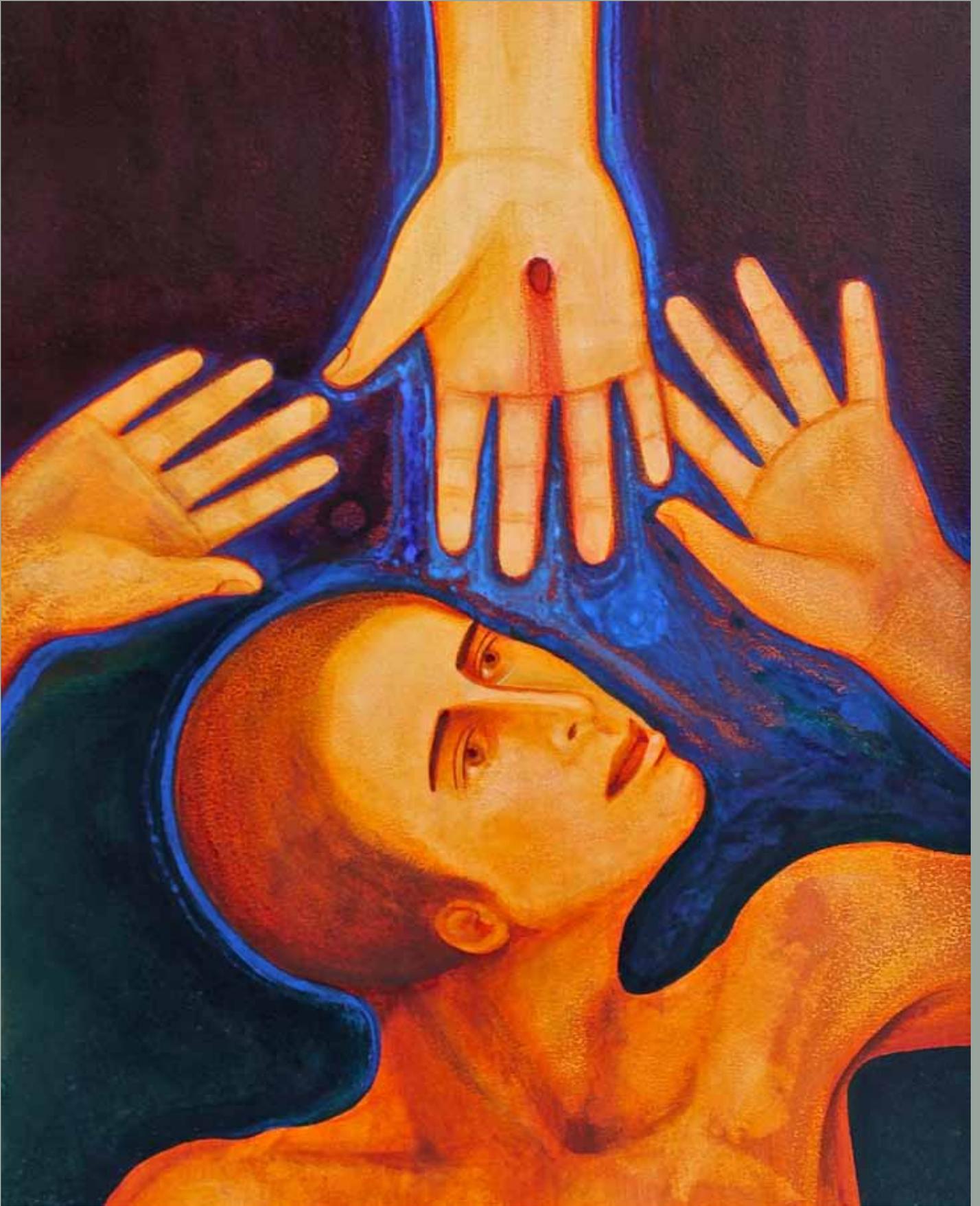
al to experiential, from understanding to awareness. Perhaps also, the response set emerges from the primarily more cerebral framework of more traditionally evangelistic churches.

There did not appear to be a specific distinction between other forms of prayer and contemplative prayer. The meaning of contemplative prayer to one was to “inform prayer through poetry, and some (not all!) Scriptures.” Represented in the remainder of the responses here included “to be reflective before, in and after prayer”, “thinking about thinking about prayer”, “the other half of the dialogue with God”, and “in silence ... deep thought and intentional reflection on the meaning of walking with God.” Noticeably, these responses showed an interactivity with God, apparently in an active rather than a passive posture of prayer. Active in the sense of using means to inform prayer, or intentionally being thoughtful about it; passive in the sense of simply resting in, and being receptive and present to the Presence.

Proposals arising from these response included opening and expanding both the definitions and meanings of contemplative prayer practices, through teaching, through dialogue, and through shared experiences; offering contemplative prayer experiences and introducing practices such as *lectio divina* and centering prayer for entering into the experience; introducing the concepts of stillness, silence, and solitude as drawing one into contemplative readiness and enhancing the sacredness of contemplative spaces; and broadening the fullness of the experience through the use of prayerful visual, auditory and postural means.

#### 5. Have any questions, doubts, hesitations or misgivings arisen for you about contemplative prayer or the practice of it? What are these?

Responses to this question ranged for those having no questions, “nothing comes to mind”, to the indignant query: “seriously, how did the prayer train get so off the tracks?” That expressive remark subtly connotes the image of various tracks of prayer and one that has been ‘derailed’, of prayer as involving a community (train) on a journey moving toward God (a destination). How do these images enhance, inform and add



Mercy

vitality to the understanding of prayer, let alone 'contemplative' prayer?

Misgivings voiced were to be expected: the first being the influence of Buddhist practices of meditation or the potential of co-mingling with them, felt to be detrimental to Christian spirituality or Christian meditative practices. This appears to be one of the most mind-full resistances to contemplative prayer, and indicates the need for clarity and distinctiveness of Christian contemplative practices, and understanding of their origin, source and use in Scripture and through church history. Alluding to the Buddhist experience as a "human level of experience", one respondent wondered about the "spiritual level" of experience possible within meditative practices. A fine topic of dialogue would be one about the interactive and nondual realities of the human and the spiritual.

The second misgiving lay in the caution that as "contemplative prayer is opening yourself up to God ... in a sense you are opening yourself up to the spiritual world." Thus, "we need to know our Bible so that any time we 'hear' something from God, we are able to test it against the character of God revealed to us in Scripture." Points well made. However, they are germane to all experiences and revelations from God, not only contemplative prayer. Clearly, as with many spiritual practices (prophecy, tongues, teaching, fasting, etc.) there is the need for sound exposition, and even then peoples' perceptions and practices will differ. Christian contemplative practices presuppose a knowledge and reverence for the Word of God and the revealing of God within it. Knowledge about contemplative practice as a pillar for the experiences within it, and trust in the Holy Spirit's leading as the foundation for it, should allay some of the cautions that deny the practice to many. Yet, is contemplative prayer and the personal and unique experience of it 'testable'? Or, does one trust that God is present to each in knowing and intimate ways, purposed to increase one's sense and love of his very Presence. More in-depth addressing of these thoughtful hesitations and counterpoints to them are beyond the scope of this paper. And, any misgivings need to be addressed in a respectful, open and realistic way.

6. If you wanted to become more aware or experienced with contemplative prayer, what would assist or encourage this?

Both communal interactions and personal reflections informed awareness and experiences with contemplative prayer. One stated that his awareness and ongoing experience came "through conversations with fellow travelers who are experimenting with it." Note the connotation of 'experimenting' - perceived to be an openness and an endeavoring. In contrast were those who suggested the need for "a self-discipline and greater emphasis on my personal prayer life." A communal and a personal. An open exploration and an engaged discipline. Other responses ranged from "not sure" about how to gain greater awareness and experience, to a request for direction in "being guided to pray through the Scriptures and to pray in different ways", to personal desires to "have more conscious 'thought-clearing' and open silence to preface my talking with God", and "to declutter my mind so I can tap into more specific, intentional prayer communication with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit." One, who was more experienced and perhaps thus more frustrated with his experience of contemplative prayer in evangelical circles, gave very specific suggestions including: "more of Henri Nouwen ... less of 'how to' do books and writers ... more time standing outside on the darkest night of the year and looking up at the leading edge of a billion galaxies and thinking 'I shouldn't argue with someone who can do that' ... more mystery, less puzzle-solving by using scriptures to prove things that were never designed to be proven ... more incarnation ... less brokering in abstractions." This particular participant apologized for his "strident" response to this question. But, a call to action and a fervor in it is apparent, and strengthens a resolve to nurture contemplative practices.

7. What is your sense of the acceptance of or objections to contemplative prayer practices within the evangelical church?

Objections raised - although not personal objections - were those expected to be raised: the

association of contemplative practices with “eastern meditative and/or Catholic practices”, thus needing to be avoided; more specifically, contemplative practices involving an “emptying of the mind” and therefore a risky undertaking, perhaps open to infiltration from spirits other than the Spirit of God; a view that it is a practice “from the past” therefore no longer current or necessary; a view of contemplative prayer as a “polarizing stance” in the evangelical church, between those who believe it is “a valid and necessary expression and those who think it is some kind of heinous practice connected to eastern philosophy.” A few commented on the limited “awareness” or education of contemplative practices, let alone any prayer practices, within the evangelical church community; and one suggested the lack of freedom for pastors to facilitate contemplative prayer practices because “the pastor’s salary is tied to the congregation’s wants.” Underlying these objections seemed a sadness, a cynicism, a confusion, a perplexity and a cautiousness.

Clearly these views point to the need to appropriate contemplative prayer for the evangelical church by unearthing the scriptural basis and early Christian tradition of contemplative prayer, and expanding the source from one perceived to arise only from Catholic or other faith traditions. It is important to invite dialogue into misgivings and misperceptions about contemplative practices and to counter these gently and respectfully with informed insights. Essential, too, is to understand rather than scorn these honest fears and cautions, which arise in the context of a genuine seeking for God.

8. Any additional comments or thoughts not covered by the questions?

Written responses to this question were minimal but included: the “importance of the survey”, the acknowledgement that many do find contemplative prayer helpful and important so “not to discourage you” through their limited response, and a broader recommendation towards using “silence in group worship and a time of silence before the pastoral prayer.” However, affirming personal responses were received in verbal interactions: for engaging in

the exploration of contemplative prayer and attempting to discover evangelical attitudes to it, for giving a forum to express one’s self, gratitude for being included in the study despite a lack of knowledge and limited responses, and a desire to know the outcome of the study. The personal encouragement brought a sense of the Spirit opening hearts for prayer, and affirmed my desire to bring Spirit-led contemplative prayer into greater awareness and acceptance within the evangelical community to which I belong.

### **Contemplative Practice: Considerations**

Reflecting on the responses given in the survey, the following considerations for engaging in contemplative practices seemed most compelling:

1. Asking the question “what is prayer?” Asking in order to expand the understanding and experience of prayer - prayer as a worded connection with God, prayer as a growing and constant attentiveness to the God who is present to us in each moment, prayer as a deepening awareness of the God who is in all things. Providing teaching and practices of prayer in all its breadth and forms - vocal, spontaneous, written, liturgical, traditional, contemplative - as a means of enriching and strengthening our prayer life. Honoring the intent to develop a more wholistic prayer life including worded prayer in all its valuable forms (adoration, petition, confession, intercession, thanksgiving) and meaningful wordless prayer of stillness and silence and being in the Living Presence. One can often lead into the other, and together these practices would yield a wholeness in prayer life that mined the best of both evangelical and contemplative prayer practices.

2. Teaching about contemplative prayer and providing settings for experiences of it, within both personal and communal life, is essential. Especially in providing a scriptural foundation and tradition emerging from the early Christian church and professed by the early Church Fathers. Making regular opportunities available to engage and to accompany one another in contemplative practices. Encouraging the opening of inner space for contemplative prayer, and

learning to offer the 'emptying' of self to give space to God - and only God. Believing that this practice is sacred and honoring to God, bringing us deeper into our relationship with God, and making our spiritual lives thrive as a community of God-lovers. Being mindful that, as Thomas Merton has counseled us: "No one teaches contemplation except God, who gives it."<sup>1</sup> Thus, knowing that contemplative prayer cannot be achieved by one's own efforts or desire, but that is a gift from God to anyone honestly seeking God in the mysterious depths between the human and the Divine. The prayerful intention is to make this gift of contemplative practice more known and more inviting.

3. Facilitating and making more customary and purposeful our dialogue about relationship with God in these ways, enriches us all as it brings into expression the many facets of God we can come to know and experience. Articulating our spiritual experiences in the deepening of our own spiritual life and relationship with the Trinity, makes possible the sharing of our walk and our experiences, not just our worship and our petitions.

4. Inviting a seeking and an awareness of God through contemplative experiences, which kindle an intimacy with God that goes beyond the scope of 'having a personal relationship with Jesus', to one of ever-deepening love for the Trinity.

5. Attracting the younger generation to contemplative practices, valuing the generation which is seeking personal meaning in place of accepting traditional dogmas, which is seeking identity in relationships rather than in instructional conventions.

6. Encouraging pastors and leaders in recognizing the diversity within the Body, not only of worship styles but also of prayer styles.

7. Exploring ways others in evangelical settings have made known, invited, and engaged in contemplative prayer practices.

8. Proposing contemplative practices to be a means of prayerfully breathing new life into evangelical circles that perhaps are languishing or needing the refreshing breath of the Spirit of God.

### **Conclusion**

The responses to questions on contemplative prayer and practices were intended to provide a glimpse into the use of these practices within an evangelical setting. The limitations of the small sample were acknowledged, yet it was believed to portray a microcosm of some evangelical circles. The heartfelt responses of the participants added value to the results and certainly provided a starting point for thoughtful reflection of the experience of contemplative practices within an evangelical setting. Inferences drawn from the responses suggested possibilities of inviting meaningful engagement in them for those unfamiliar with or uncertain about these practices, as well as the need to nurture discovery of the great gift of contemplative prayer to those who are drawn to it in their spiritual quest for God.

Contemplative prayer and practices offer a sacred space to come face to face with the God who is Present to each one in a unique and intimate way. Led by the Spirit into the Mystery of God, and feeling the stirring of one's own spirit in response, or resting in the stillness of the depths of God, are gifts freely disposed by God who deeply desires the intimacy in this relationship. Yet, contemplative prayer is not an obligation in our spiritual life. Rather, it is an offering to God, at the invitation and leading of the Holy Spirit, to those who seek to follow God into the depths of their spirit and his. Julian of Norwich tells us:

It is God's will that we continue to seek him and strive to behold him, waiting for the moment when he chooses by special grace to show us himself. This does him the most honor and profits you; it happens gently and effectively with the guiding grace of the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

May we, in evangelical traditions, learn to seek, wait, and behold God through the Holy Spirit, in the special grace of contemplative prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 2007), 271

<sup>2</sup> Colledge, E & Walsh, J., trans., *Julian of Norwich: Showings* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1978)

**Roland Mahler**

## **Comment to „A Reflection: The Practice of Contemplative Prayer from an Evangelical Perspective: a Seeking and a Yearning“**

This article by Jackie Stinton examines the results of a survey concerning contemplative prayer among evangelical Christians. Motivated by far-reaching personal experiences and changes resulting from contemplative prayer, Stinton attempts to collect and evaluate relevant defining, practical and critical conceptions and also experiences of evangelical Christians. In the final part of the article, she draws from the results her conclusions for an evangelical practice of contemplative prayer.

In the process, it becomes evident that the defining conceptions, despite a clearly present acceptance, diverge quite widely. It can be concluded from this that no tradition has developed in this area within evangelical circles. This insight, in my opinion, could be anticipated and corresponds to my own experience over the last decades. In fact, the conceptions of prayer among evangelical (and also among charismatic!) Christians seem to be focussed principally on intercession and worship (musically animated prayer). In the meantime, the results of the first survey encourage the author to make helpful and noteworthy recommendations directed to evangelical churches and groups regarding the contemplative form of prayer.

The survey on the significance of contemplative prayer in the life of evangelical (?) Christians launched by Stinton certainly indicates a growing interest in the topic as well as a considerable variance in the practice understood under this term. This state of affairs allows various interpretations. I tend to see in it a reaction to the current lack of a space where the individual can have intensive inner experience. The out-



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ward programme of events offered in church services and conferences, supported by media, fosters responsiveness to external stimuli – as our media-influenced society likewise does in the greatest variety of ways. The perception of the spiritual impulses from within tends to be pushed to one side by this, the ability to concentrate without external media support (in this case by means of sermon, music etc.) is diminishing constantly. What is inward is felt to be empty and boring and in need of supplementation from outside. The contemplative path of experience, opposing this trend, attempts to enable new encounters with the stimuli, felt by the inner senses, of silence and the personal “nothing”. Here the subject is the “naked presence” (R. Rohr) of God and man – lying beyond verbal and emotional interaction.

Stinton’s article makes us aware of a dimension of Christian theology neglected by Protestant word theology and attempts what is only a preliminary systematic look at the phenomena of an incipient rediscovery of meditative-contemplative elements in the exercise of faith among evangelical Christians. The results show a diver-

sified reception of the corresponding Christian tradition when it comes to putting it into practice methodically. The extent to which this practice is preceded by a consciousness of the laying of a theoretical-theological foundation, such as that successfully laid by Thomas Keaton and going far beyond the limits of Catholic spiri-

tuality, is left unclear (although the roots of this tradition, in the Church Fathers, for example, are pointed out). This lack of theological pervasion is fundamentally regrettable, but shows the more pragmatic-phenomenological approach of Stinton (as a psychologist!) – ultimately inspired not least by her own experience.



1970's: „Family“

**Thanh Tu Nguyen (Vietnam),  
Christian R. Bellehumeur (Canada)**  
**Durand's Imaginary and  
Growth after Trauma:  
A Qualitative Research  
Report of Christian  
Vietnamese Immigrants  
Living in Canada**

**Introduction**

Vietnamese immigrants have gone through tremendous losses: fleeing the home country, crossing the ocean by boat, witnessing loved ones dying, being imprisoned in wretched refugee camps, resettling in host countries where the culture, language, weather and food are totally strange (Nguyen, Messe, & Stollack, 1999; Steel, Silove, Phan & Bauman 2002). In fact, Tran (1993) - who did research on psychological trauma and depression in a sample of Vietnamese people in the United States - reported that Vietnamese respondents in her study had been born and had grown up during war, and many of them had been directly involved in combat or had spent years in concentration camps, or in Communist prisons or in refugee camps. Others had witnessed the violent death of family members during the war, or they themselves had experienced rape, robbery, or starvation as they fled from Vietnam. Such experiences may contribute to feelings of helplessness in Vietnamese immigrants. Furthermore, several researchers have suggested that a sense of helplessness resulting from traumatizing events is extremely damaging to a person's self-image (Steel et al., 2002). Particularly from the point of view of Asian cultural perspectives, any movement outside of and away from the family and community structures can threaten individual's loyalty and sense of security within the family and community units (Lee, 1997).

Although they have faced challenges, changes, disruption and losses associated with hardships, Dorais (2007) reported that Vietnamese immigrants often turn to God to find hope and

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strength to be able to adapt in host countries. In order to explore this theme, two main theories, the theory of God image (Rizzutto, 1979) and the theory of the anthropological structures of the imaginary (Durand, 1960, 2005) will be adopted. Both theories have been applied to the human life from infancy onwards, in terms of helping people not only deal with existential fear, but also with finding meaning in life; the research foundation on these two theories is robust (Lawrence, 1997; Chamber, 2001; Schaap-Jonker, 2008; Loureiro, 2008). While development of God image (Rizutto, 1979) centres on personal and interpersonal experiences of God (i.e., Object relations), the anthropological structures of the imaginary provide a larger framework for individuals to embrace personal stories, including religious and cultural differences (Durand, 1999).

In line with Durand (2005), Rizzutto (1979) proposed that the imaginary - expressed through the use of symbolism and images - echoes the symbolic world carried out by reli-

gion, in fact, both imaginary and religion have helped persons explore their inner world and find support and meaning in life (Fowler, 1981; Assagioli, 1994; Côté, 2003; Lefebvre, 2005). For instance, Lavoie (1999) has demonstrated that the use of mental imagery by exploring clients' metaphors, images and symbols facilitated psycho-spiritual integration in counselling. Furthermore, researchers revealed that the imaginary allows the person to present his/her story from the point at which she/he is, with respect to a cultural, social and religious background (Rossi, 1985).

The aim of this study is to deepen our understanding of the possible connections between the imaginary and God image, using a more global anthropological perspective. Three main reasons justify the interest in Durand's theory of the imaginary: firstly, as previously mentioned, it is an anthropological theory that has particular interest in symbolic language (i.e. God image), myths and cultural and religious references, pertaining to the study of religious belief and God image (Griffith, 2010). These elements resonate with our selected measure of God image in its cognitive and affective aspects (Schaap-Jonker, 2008). The depth and breadth of knowledge that supports the original theory of the author, who is recognized worldwide, is to be found in well-documented works (Chamber, 2001; Loureiro, 2008). Secondly, an empirical instrument is available which assesses the imaginary profile of the individual (AT.9 test, Archetypal test with nine elements, developed by Y. Durand, 2005). This measurement gives added support to the scientific validity to this theory (Loureiro, 2008). Moreover, Durand's theory has been shown to be relevant to Eastern culture, particularly in the Chinese context (Sun, 2004; 2013). Thirdly, the imaginary categories, supported by the empirical test, AT.9, may be useful in the context of clinical intervention in counselling and spirituality because of the possible relations that can be made with cultural, symbolic, and religious belief systems (Rizzuto, 1979; Laprée, 2004). For instance, through the person's drawing and storytelling, we can measure the structure of his/her imaginary, and then examine it in relation to his/her image of God (Rizzuto, 1979; Schaap-Jonker,

2008; Durand, 2005). This image of God can be seen as one's internal source of support in challenging moments (Dezutter et al., 2010; Gall, 2000); or it can be considered a cause for more distress in terms of an angry God image (Exline et al., 2000). Knowing this may guide further interventions along these lines (Griffith, 2007). Before we expand further on these ideas, we will define the main terms of this study.

### **Imaginary/ Imagination**

The terms "imaginary" and "imagination" do not have the same meaning in French and in English. The "imaginary" ("imaginaire" treated as a noun in French) is often employed to express the inner creative force which produces images and is the fruit of mental activity; it has two overlapping meanings: firstly it gives rise to the products of the imagination, fields of images and symbol that are created by the individual and collective fantasy; secondly, it is considered as the dynamic human faculty of organizing the complex system of images and meaning attached to the images (Braga, 2007; Wunenburger, 2003). Furthermore, for Braga (2007), the imaginary is the energetic human ability to form and transform images and is profoundly influenced by cultural, religious/spiritual, social settings; it refers to a repertory of images that defines what, for a given individual, is possible to imagine (Chamber, 2001).

Imagination, according to Sutton-Smith (1988) helps make knowledge applicable to solving problems and is fundamental to integrating experience and the learning process. Simply stated, images are products of imagination that are governed by the imaginary to make the abstract visualized socially, culturally and spiritually (Egan, 1992). For instance, the concept of love is symbolized by the image of the heart; a snake is a symbol of healing in medicine (Egan, 1992; Norman, 2000). In this research, we use the term "imaginary", defined as the innate human capacity to form images that are influenced by inner world, culture, religion and social settings. The fields of images are organized in different structures, as elaborated in Durand's theory of the anthropological structures of the imaginary (1999).



Homecoming

God image: The God image is a psychological construct related to how a person feels toward God, e.g., trustworthy, consistent and comforting or untrustworthy, inconsistent and his/her impression of how God feels about him/her (Grimes, 2007). This process reflects one's emotional experience of God, an experience that is developed through an initially unconscious set of relations, in which parents and significant others play a crucial role (Schaap-Jonker, 2008). In this context, God image embraces both the experiential and the rational, since it relates to one's emotional experiences and cognitive understanding of God as well (Hoffman, 2005).

God concept: The "God concept" is defined as one's intellectual, theological understanding of God, for instance, Almighty Saviour (Lawrence, 1997). In other words, the "God concept" is "the God of the philosopher" about whom the child forms an idea through cultural, religious, social teaching imparted through liturgies, sacred books, images, symbols of the divinity (Rizzuto, 1970, p.4). In the next section, we discuss further the link between the imaginary and God images.

### **The imaginary and God images**

Durand's *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary* (1960) and Rizzuto's *Theory of God image* (1979) are similar in the sense of elaborating and re-elaborating inner images (i.e. an Object Relation) to be able to deal not only with existential anxiety but also with change and meaning for life. Rizzuto, however, more specifically stresses the function and the development of the God image, while Durand has a more generalized approach that allows structures to consider cultural influences when dealing with anxiety over the passage of time and with the fear of death (Durand, 2005). Rizzuto (1979) also enters into the field of the imaginary in terms of forming the God image (i.e. an Object Relation) to walk with the person throughout the life journey. For her, this process is conditioned by one's culture, religion and one's own needs; she bases her argument on the study of Nagera (1969) who assesses the significance of imaginary companions for ego development in dealing with distress as follows:

1. The imaginary companion frequently plays a specific positive role in the development of the child, and once that role is fulfilled, it tends to disappear and is finally covered by the usual infantile amnesia. 2) The functions served by the imaginary companion depend upon the special needs of the child. 3) Some of the imaginary companion services to the child are (a) scapegoat for badness and negative impulses: the imaginary companion can be a projection of the child's bad behaviour; (b) confirmation and prolongation of the child's sense of omnipotent control; (c) assisting superego in the face of a weakened tendency to behave well; (d) companion for a lonely, neglected, or rejected child; (e) corrective complement of painful reality; (f) helper in moments of crisis to "avoid regression and symptom formation"; (g) impersonator of ego ideals from an earlier period (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 191).

In this sense, Rizzuto's work and Nagera's study allow one to better appreciate the link between God image and the imaginary. For instance, Rizzuto (1979) reports the results of her psychiatric patients in terms of using the imaginary to draw their God image which she groups in four positions: 1) those who have a God whose existence they do not doubt; 2) those wondering whether or not to believe in a God; they are not sure God exists; 3) those amazed, angered, or quietly surprised to see others deeply invested in a God who does not interest them; 4) those who struggle with a demanding, harsh God they would like to get rid of if they were not convinced of this God's existence and power (p.91). As stated above, within the context of the imaginary, images are created to deal with anxiety and fear of time passing by (Rizzuto, 1979; Durand, 1999). On this very central point, Rizzuto and Durand's theories do converge.

The anthropological structures of the imaginary has been adopted for this study since it has been empirically validated through the creation of an instrument, the other words, the imaginary is set up to compensate for disappointment, to develop a shield against fears and provide alternative solutions (Boia, 1999). Furthermore, Durand (1999) searched through the fields of

anthropology, psychology, philosophy, different cultures, and religions, and found that human activities are revealed in various fundamental structures of the imaginary. There lie the origin of human culture, namely in a wealth of images and symbols that continue to shape ways of thinking and relating. Durand (1960) found that structures of the imaginary may be identified as 1) “heroic” : this structure relates to symbols that refer to fighting in battle, to victory, to making a stand, to separating what is good from what is bad or evil. These symbols and images refer to a heroic struggle as part of a daily life spent countering the anxiety of time and the threat of death. The heroic structure is commonly associated with the rigour of the rational thinking; it is also concerned with the tendency to look for elevation and liberation; 2) “intimate or mystical” : the symbols attached to this structure are more commonly associated with heart-felt ways of living: finding peace without turbulence; seeing everything as friendly, gentle and peaceful; life is warm when internalized, like good food that we absorb to nurture ourselves (Xiberras, 2002. 3). Third category of the imaginary, called “synthetic” refers to a harmonious integration between the above two categories. In fact, this third category of the imaginary can enable the two opposing structures (heroic and mystical) to achieve a healthy harmony while remaining in each other’s presence, instead of excluding the other. The synthetic category is revealed in one’s ability to overcome existential fear with faith in the fullness of time and in final salvation (Xiberras, 2002, p. 94-95); it is also found in several different cultural traditions and myths (monotheistic and polytheistic). However, Durand (2005) indicates that if one of the two opposing structures (heroic or mystical) of the imaginary takes too much space at another’s expense, then an unhealthy state develops and causes discomfort (i.e. mental illness, social discomfort, conflicts). In other words, the person’s imaginary could come to light in a „defective“ manner“. Furthermore, a non-structuring category showed in one’s drawing and storytelling may be observed with AT9 test (Archetypal test with nine elements, Durand, 2005, p.11), which identifies the type of imaginary an individual possesses. There-

fore, Durand’s AT.9 test (which will be described later) not only provides the structures for assessing one’s category of the imaginary (heroic, mystical and synthetic), but also offer a framework to assess and better understand one’s unstructured category of the imaginary. In sum, the use of Durand’s theory of the imaginary combined with Rizzuto’s theory on God image appears relevant to the study of the imaginary and images of God among Vietnamese immigrants living in Canada. This study proposes that those Vietnamese immigrants whose imaginary falls in the synthetic category would most likely embrace a positive God image. According to Wunenburger (2013), it offers a valuable heuristic potential to foster relevant analytical tools for intercultural studies. The next section will further discuss on the AT.9 Test and the Questionnaire of God Image.

### **AT.9 Test**

Using the Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary as basis, Yves Durand (2005) developed an archetypal test comprised of a drawing that tells a story, using nine universal symbolic elements (Durand, 2005) to measure the structures of the imaginary. Practically speaking, this test uses a sheet of paper and a pencil without an eraser; the participant is asked to draw, and later, to compose a written narrative of the drawing (i.e. “what happens in the drawing?”). Note that the AT.9 follows a strict protocol along with these instructions: “Tell a story by drawing the following elements: a fall, a sword, a refuge, a devouring monster, something cyclical, a character, water, an animal, and fire” (Durand, 2005). Durand (2005) suggests that the above nine symbolic elements would: 1) bring forth the problem of time, death, and anguish (i.e. the fall and the devouring monster); 2) suggest tools to resolve anxiety: the sword, the refuge and/ or something cyclical (these archetypes respectively serve as the functional starting points for the heroic, mystical, duex and/or synthetic categories); and 3) serve as complements: the person’s role is to be the main actor in relation with another eight elements.

The interpretation of the AT.9 is primarily grounded on the manner in which the “dramatic-design story” is organized, and secondly, on

how the elements are structured (Durand, 2005, p.21-22). Therefore, data are mainly obtained in the form of a drawing and a story-telling, followed by a questionnaire (Durand, 2005). The questionnaire allows one: a) to discover how the imagined story ends; b) to confirm participants' position in relation to the character of the imagined story; c) to comprehend what are the symbolic meaning of the nine items drawn by the participants. Depending on how these nine elements are assembled to create a unified drawing and story, it indicates the category into which the individual's imaginary falls: heroic, mystical, DUEX (double existential containing both heroic and mystical elements), synthetic (symbolically integrated), or non-structured. Lastly, the classification of the AT.9 is done with the participation of at least 3 researchers; inter-rater reliability is taken into account.

**The Questionnaire on God image (QGI)**

The Dutch Questionnaire on God image (QGI, Jonker, 2008) with a Likert format ranging from 1 "totally disagree" to 5 "totally agree" was used in the present study since it showed high psychometric properties. This questionnaire consists of 33 items on a two dimension level: affective-cognitive. The affective dimension has three scales: 1) security/closeness: "When I think of God I experience trust", Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.93$ ; 2) anxiety and guilt: "When I think of God I experience fear of not being good enough",  $\alpha = 0.94$ ; and 3) feelings of discontent: "When I think of God I experience dissatisfaction",  $\alpha = 0.75$ ). The cognitive dimension also has three scales; 1) supportive actions such as "God comforts me",  $\alpha = 0.98$ ; 2) punishing/ ruling actions such as "God exercises power,  $\alpha = 0.71$ " and 3) passivity: "God leaves people to their own devices",  $\alpha = 0.76$  (Schaap-Jonker, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Verhagen, & Zock, 2002). To measure GI among Vietnamese immigrants, the current study refers to the two subscales: positive feelings towards God (PFG) with 9 items such as loving, affection and security ( $r = .86$ ) and negative feelings towards God with 8 items such as uncertainty, guilt, fear of not good enough ( $r = .78$ ) since these two subscales reflect Rizutto's theory and also have high level of internal consistency. Table 1 shows the correlation between

these three sub-scales of questionnaire on God Image (QGI) in the current study.

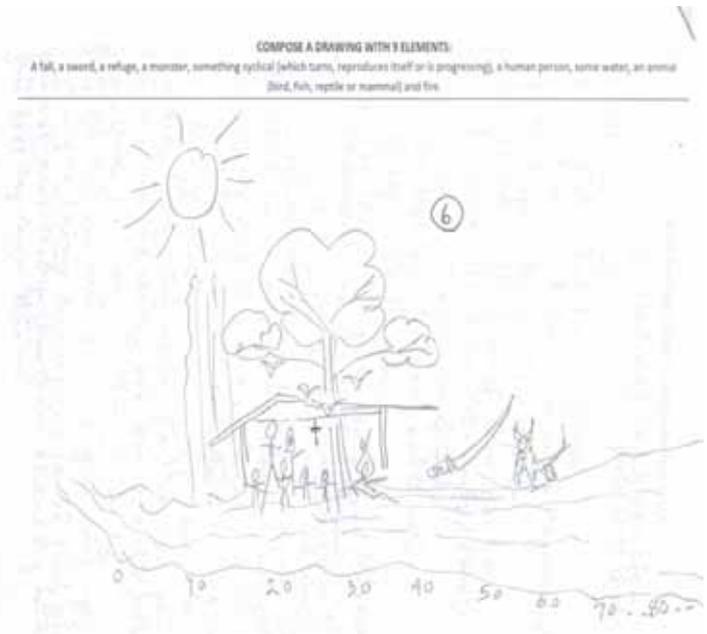
**Table 1. Relationships between QGI Dimensions**

Variables	1	2	3
Positive Perception of God	1		
Positive Feelings for God	83**	1	
Negative Feelings for God	-.41**	-.45**	1

\*\*p<.01, two-tailed.

*Examples of results of the AT.9 Test and of the questionnaire on God image*

This current report will show some examples of qualitative study done in the context of the first author doctoral thesis. Due to the limitation of space, two relevant participants' AT.9 will be used to illustrate the relationship between structures of the imaginary in relation to images of God ( see Figure 1 and Figure 2). First, Figure 1 clearly illustrates the synthetic category of the imaginary. Both the drawing and the storytelling appear coherent and symbolic in a meaningful manner (i.e. the love and the protection of God in the context of adversity symbolized by the monster's evil). The result of this AT.9 has also been examined in relation to the results obtained from the questionnaire on God image. Concerning this questionnaire for this participant, the score of the Positive Feeling on God image is 4.5 on a 5 point-Likert scale; a score a 5 refers to a highest score).



**Figure 1: Synthetic category**

Explain the drawing: “the Sun is God, the fall is God’s love and grace, the river is ongoing happiness, people are my family and myself, the fire is the love of God and our love, the sword is the protection of God, the monster is devil or evil things, birds are happiness, trees are shadows of love, the numbers are years ...our lives .



**Figure 2: Unstructured category**

Explaining the drawing: I went through a lot of changes from my childhood to my teenage years. But the major change came upon hearing God’s voices 4 years ago. I was in a rough shape in my relationship with my husband, to the point that I wanted to give up my marriage. God sent a message from a friend who introduced me to a marriage workshop. I heard God’s voice: be patient, do your best. Let God take care the rest. I started changing my thinking. I asked myself what was the most important to me: my family or what I want??? From then on, I started praying a lot. Any time I have to deal with anything beyond my ability. I give it up to God. ”

Concerning Figure 2, it can be observed from the drawing that the nine elements of the drawing are not connected to one another. Even if the storytelling explains some aspects of this drawing, this AT.9 is considered as unstructured. The result of this AT.9 has also been examined in relation to the results obtained from the questionnaire on God image. Concerning this questionnaire for this participant, the score of the positive feelings of God image is 2.7 on a 5 point-Likert scale). Compared with the participant of Figure 1, this score on positive feelings of God is significantly lesser for the participant of Figure 2.

## Discussion

In periods of crisis and desperation, the imaginary and the person’s Faith can play a compensatory role in the face of “real” history. In fact, the above examples ( Figures 1 and 2) suggest that there is a link between God image and imaginary (for further explanations, see Nguyen, 2014). Furthermore, the imaginary can be seen as a very sensitive indicator of personal growth and of historical evolution as well (Boia, 1944). Using the structure of the imaginary as ground, we can observe in Figure 1 that a high score on Positive feeling of God image is related to to synthetic category of the imaginary; a weaker score on Positive God Image is related to an unstructured category of imaginary. It is known that the goal of the imaginary is not to annul the real. On the contrary, its approach is to integrate the existing reality and give meaning to the events attached to it. Durand (1999) also sees the imaginary as a way of dealing with existential anxiety and with time passing by, since one’s imagination permits him/her to master the faces of time and death (Demers-Desrosiers, 1982; Loureiro, 2008).

It should be noted that investigating the links between two constructs, images of God and the imaginary, and looking at the links between the categories of the imaginary of the AT.9 test with scores on God images, is explorative and innovative in the Vietnamese sample. Though no previous empirical research has studied this link, Bellehumeur (2012) proposed the association between the imaginary and spirituality. Furthermore, both Rizzutto (1979) and Durand (1999) have suggested that the fields of images are formed and reformed throughout one’s life; they are influenced by culture, religion, sociology, life-events and so on, to help one deal, not only with existential anxiety, but also with meaning making (Boia, 1999). Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicate the link between the imaginary and images of God that sit in the depth of the field of the imaginary (Rizutto, 1979). In fact, as observed in Figure 1, where the participant’s image of God is positive is also the one whose drawing and storytelling, a product of the AT.9 test, is the most coherent, connected and positive despite the adversity compared to the Figure 2’s participant who bears a less positive God

image. This suggests that the participant of Figure 1 with a positive God image may integrate well, in the sense of dramatic events becoming meaningful with time (Durand, 2005), and that this participant could actualize the present moment by selecting events that were meaningful in the past with regard to a hope for future (Poirel & Hillairet, 1968, Dorais 2007). This falls in line with the findings of Bellehumeur and colleagues (2011, 2012, 2013) that the positive form of the synthetic category of the imaginary associating with various positive dimensions (i.e. high level of spirituality, of meaning making and of integration) corresponds to a higher self-esteem (Bellehumeur & Lavoire, 2013; Lefebvre, 2005). The results of Figures 1 and 2 are consistent with the study of Rizzutto (1979) on using the imaginary to draw images of God; she found that participants' images of God reflected their vision of self, of life and the world (p.91). Finally, the results of the current study support the link between Vietnamese participants' Images of God and the imaginary category. Suggestions for future research are numerous in the context of the reemergence of psychological research associating with spirituality in multicultural settings.

### **Implications**

Observing participant engagement when doing the AT.9 test (a total of 32 participants for the doctoral dissertation, see Nguyen, 2014), the principal researcher proposes that the use of the AT.9 in Counselling to work with Vietnamese immigrants having a traumatic history is relevant. Reflecting with them on the isolated elements in their drawing could lead to awareness and a change for the better (Laprée, 2004). As in Art therapy that allows people to express unspeakable tragedy and make sense out of it through drawing (Appelton, 2011), the AT.9 test (Durand, 2005) with drawing and storytelling would be used as a therapeutic tool to access

Vietnamese immigrants' mental issues which are stigmatized culturally and often described as somatization or rationalization of feelings as a common way of expression (Chung, & Kaga-wa-Singer, 1995). The AT.9 test therefore appears relevant to therapy in collective cultures (Sun, 2004).

The theoretical implication of the present finding is that regardless of cultural differences, innate human capacity of the imaginary is universal in the sense that it seeks meaning and avoids pain (Durand, 2005). This imaginative capacity is demonstrated in ability to form and transform images of Divine and of life and is revealed in life-narrative and drawing. These are coherent with people's positive God images that would help safeguard against distress and innovate a project of new life (Borch, 2013) or vice versa regarding the unstructured categories. The current anthropological findings therefore lent support to the field of Counselling and Spirituality that is concerned with human development as the whole (Greene, 2002).

Counselling and Spirituality are concerned with human growth (spirit, mind and body as a whole) and environment interaction, so it would be useful to take into consideration the communal dimensions of those who come from collective cultures. In this context, Zinnbauer (2013) recommends an integrative model for theory, research and practice that we thought that would be relevant. For instance, he takes into consideration multiple dimensions, multiple methods, multiple contexts, and flexibility, personal and communal backgrounds (p.73). Durand (2005) with his AT.9 test allowing people expressing themselves through drawing and storytelling is an advanced technique for bridging the cultural gap. The participants' examples could be also used as referent for researchers who are interested in the multicultural context and an interdisciplinary approach.



Look Up!

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## Christian Bellehumeur in Interview with Werner May about “Gilbert Durand’s Theory of Imaginary Meaningful for Christian Psychology”

### 1. Can you briefly describe what Gilbert Durand’s theory of the imaginary is about?

First, I would like to express my gratitude for giving me this opportunity to share a few lines on the work of Gilbert Durand and some of my thoughts on how his theory can be useful for a Christian psychologist doing research in the field of counseling, psychotherapy and spirituality.

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A video by Christian Bellehumeur:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lm\\_YtH83H2k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lm_YtH83H2k)

Given Gilbert Durand’s remarkable contribution in the field of the imaginary (there are more than 370 titles in his general bibliography), it is somehow challenging to answer briefly to this relevant question.

## Christian Bellehumeur en entrevue avec Werner May, un entretien sur la théorie de l’imaginaire de Gilbert Durand: le sens de celle-ci pour la psychologie chrétienne

### 1. Qu’est-ce que la théorie de l’imaginaire de Gilbert Durand, pouvez-vous brièvement la décrire ?

Tout d’abord, je tiens à exprimer ma gratitude pour me donner l’occasion de partager quelques lignes sur les travaux de Gilbert Durand ainsi que mes pensées sur la façon dont la théorie durandienne peut être utile pour un psychologue chrétien qui oeuvre dans le domaine du counseling, de la psychothérapie qui intègre la spiritualité.

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Étant donné la remarquable contribution de Gilbert Durand pour le domaine de l’imaginaire (sa bibliographie générale compte plus de 370 titres), il est en quelque sorte difficile de répondre brièvement à cette question pertinente.

In order to better describe Durand's theory, one needs to have a clear definition of the term imaginary. The French term "imaginaire" is a relatively new concept coined in order to re-ennoble and to re-enhance the suffering and discredited term "imagination". According to Wunenburger (2003), "l'imaginaire" (treated grammatically as a noun) has two overlapped meanings. In the first instance, it designates the products of the imagination, the passive body of images and representations created by an individual or collective fantasy. (...) In the second instance, "l'imaginaire" is seen, on a larger scale, as the dynamic human faculty of creating this complex system of images. It designates the "inner creative force of imagination". Furthermore, it can be understood as „the visible outcome of a psychic energy, which has its formal structures both at the level of individuals and of collectivities“ (Braga, 2007, p. 62). It is „a system, a dynamic function of organizing images, that gives them soundness and correlates them“ (Braga, 2007, p. 63). Therefore, given this second meaning, Gilbert Durand shows that "l'imaginaire" does not mean only the imaginary, in the sense of that which pertains to the faculty of the imagination, but refers also to the repertory of items (or images) that define what, for a given individual or collective subjectivity, it is possible to imagine. In English, some authors would use *imaginarium* (to refer to imaginary as a noun) which is in fact not a formless heap or a pile, but a structured set, governed, that is, by the dynamics of relationality and a logic of difference about images and symbols.

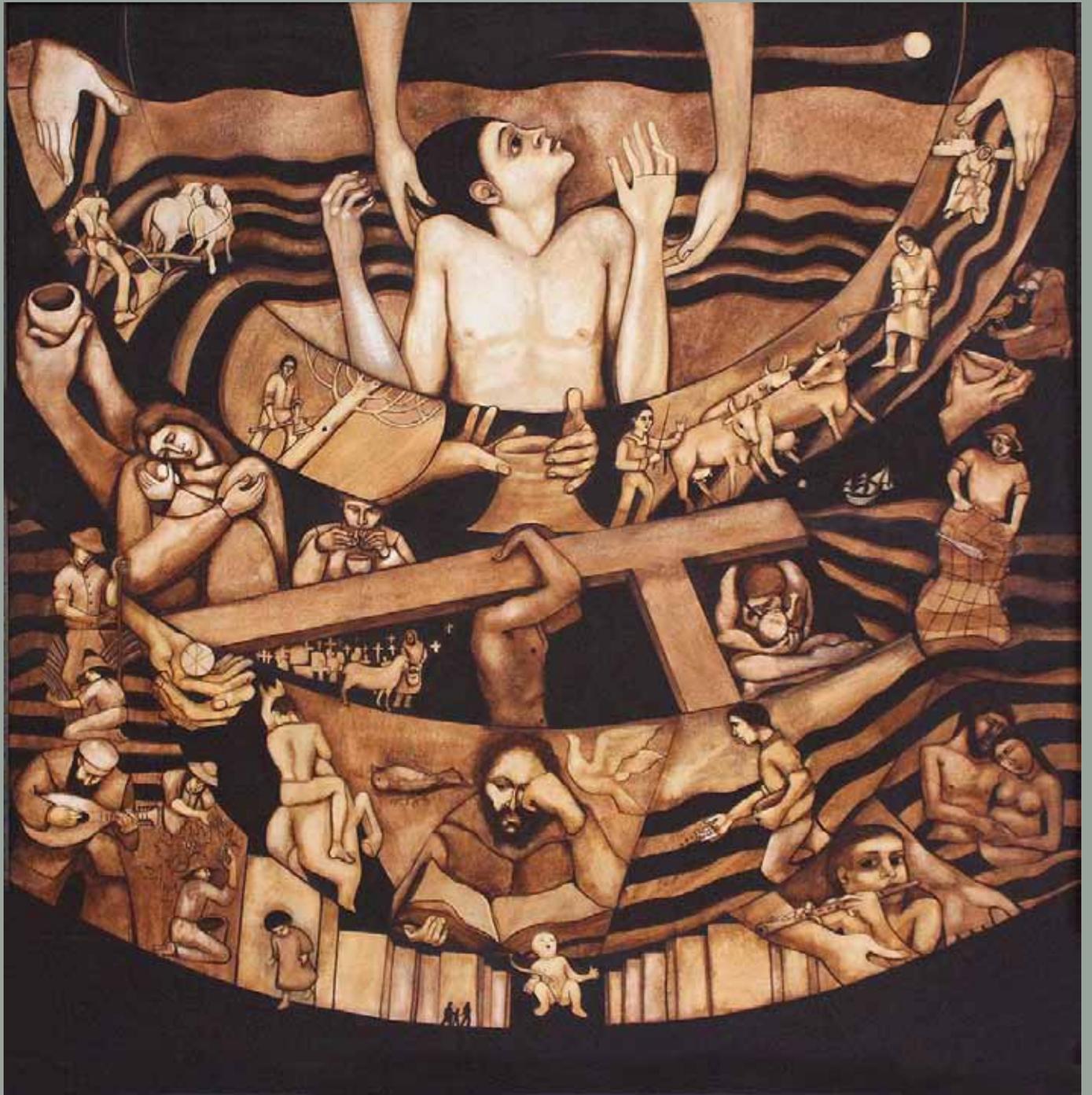
#### *A brief overview of Gilbert Durand's theory of the imaginary*

Gilbert Durand (1921-2011) was a French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist. He referred to various authors such as Gaston Bachelard, Carl Gustav Jung, Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, Cassirer, Chomsky. He was a professor of Cultural Anthropology and Sociology of Culture at the University of Grenoble and Chambéry. Founder of the "Centre for Research into the Imaginary" (CRI) at Chambéry (1966) along with more than 40 other similar CRIs around the world.

Afin de mieux décrire la théorie de Gilbert Durand, il importe d'emblée de bien définir le terme « imaginaire ». Le terme français « imaginaire » est un concept relativement nouveau qui a été inventé afin de rétablir et de revaloriser la notion de l' « imagination », pourtant longtemps méprisée et discréditée. Selon Wunenburger (2003), « l'imaginaire » (traité grammaticalement en tant que nom) a deux significations qui se chevauchent. Le premier sens désigne les produits de l'imagination, soit le corpus des images et des représentations créés par une fantaisie individuelle ou collective. (...) Dans le second cas, „l'imaginaire“ est considéré, sur une plus grande échelle, comme la faculté humaine dynamique de la création de ce système complexe d'images. Il désigne la « force créative interne de l'imagination ». En outre, il peut être compris comme « le résultat visible d'une énergie psychique, qui a ses structures formelles, tant au niveau des individus et des collectivités » (Braga, 2007, p. 62, notre traduction). Il est « un système, une fonction dynamique d'organisation des images, qui leur donne la cohérence et assure entre elles une corrélation » (Braga, 2007, p. 63, notre traduction). Par conséquent, compte tenu de ce second sens, Gilbert Durand montre que « l'imaginaire » ne signifie pas seulement l'imaginaire, dans le sens de ce qui se rapporte à la faculté de l'imagination, mais se réfère également au répertoire des objets (ou images) qui est possible d'imaginer par un individu ou une collectivité donnée. En anglais, certains auteurs utilisent « *imaginarium* » (pour se référer à l'imaginaire en tant que nom) qui est en fait non pas un tas ou une pile d'images, mais un ensemble structuré, régi par une dynamique (du relationnel) et par une logique qui tient compte de la différence en ce qui concerne les images et les symboles.

#### *Un bref aperçu de la théorie de l'imaginaire de Gilbert Durand*

Gilbert Durand (1921-2011) est un philosophe français, anthropologue et sociologue. Il s'est inspiré de divers auteurs tels que Gaston Bachelard, Carl Gustav Jung, Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, Cassirer, Chomsky, pour en nommer quelques-uns. Il a été professeur d'anthropologie culturelle



Ora et Labora

In his seminal work *The anthropological structures of the imaginary* (ASI), Gilbert Durand (1960) considers the human being as a *homo symbolicus*, and the whole symbolic world of the latter constitutes his imaginary capability which Durand (1979) calls „the human whole universe „(p. 23). According to Wunenburger (2013), although the 1960s in France and elsewhere were dominated by two main methodologies (i.e. the structuralism of Cl. Lévi-Strauss and the hermeneutics of P. Ricoeur), there would be a search for a third way: „(...) between the two methods, G. Durand wants to take from the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss a science of discourse structures, but from the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur the dimension of symbolic meaning, resulting therefore in stating a „figurative structuralism“ (p. 8).

Moreover, we can also highlight Gilbert Durand's remarkable erudition. Indeed, this prolific author has demonstrated – through the arts, religious beliefs, mythologies esotericism, Schools of humanities, mainstream civilization trends and the hermeneutics of applied sciences – how all human activity unfolds in various fundamental systems of structures of the imaginary. According to Durand (1960 [1992]), there are, at the origin of human cultures, reservoirs of images and symbols which continue to shape our ways of thinking, living and dreaming. According to Wunenburger (2013), the imaginary is not just the concern of a rational approach, but is part of the whole human living constitution. To realize his vision of the person, Durand (1960 [1992]) argues that these images and archetypal patterns, common to anyone deploy in an „anthropological journey,“ defined as a „constant exchange that exists at the level of the imaginary between subjective and assimilationist impulses and the objective intimations emanating from the cosmic and social environment „(Durand, 1960 [1992], p. 38, our translation). Durand thus goes against the current of positivism which rather emphasizes the importance of the world of ideas at the expense of imaginative life.

et de sociologie de la culture à l'Université de Grenoble et de Chambéry ainsi que fondateur du „Centre de recherche sur l'Imaginaire« (CRI) à Chambéry (1966) avec plus de 40 autres CRI semblables dans le monde.

Dans son œuvre fondatrice *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, Gilbert Durand (1960 [1992]) y considère l'humain comme un *homo symbolicus*, et l'ensemble du monde symbolique de celui-ci constitue la capacité imaginaire que Durand (1979) nomme « l'Univers humain tout entier » (p. 23). Selon Wunenburger (2013), bien que les années 1960 aient été dominées par deux grandes méthodologies (c.-à-d. le structuralisme de Cl. Lévi-Strauss et l'herméneutique de P. Ricoeur), il existerait une recherche d'une troisième voie : « (...) entre les deux méthodes, G. Durand veut conserver de l'œuvre de Cl. Lévi-Strauss une science des structures des discours, mais de l'herméneutique de Paul Ricoeur la dimension du sens symbolique, aboutissant ainsi à énoncer un « structuralisme figuratif » (p. 8).

Par ailleurs, on peut aussi souligner l'érudition remarquable de Gilbert Durand. En effet, cet auteur prolifique a démontré – à travers les arts, le religieux, les mythologies et l'ésotérisme, les écoles de sciences humaines, les grands courants de civilisations et l'herméneutique des sciences appliquées – comment toute activité humaine se déploie en divers régimes fondamentaux de structures de l'imaginaire. Selon Durand (1960 [1992]), il existe, à l'origine des cultures humaines, des réservoirs d'images et de symboles qui ne cessent de façonner nos manières de penser, de vivre et de rêver. Selon Wunenburger (2013), l'imaginaire ne relève plus seulement d'une approche rationnelle, mais s'intègre dans la totalité de la constitution du vivant humain. Pour rendre compte de sa vision de la personne, Durand (1960 [1992]) avance que ces images et ces schèmes archétypaux communs à toute personne se déploient en un « trajet anthropologique », défini comme un « incessant échange qui existe au niveau de l'imaginaire entre les pulsions subjectives et assimilatrices et les intimations objectives émanant du milieu cosmique et social» (Durand, 1960 [1992], p. 38). Durand va

According to Durand (1960[1992]), there are two great „systems“ constructing mental, visual and narrative images, being the diurnal and nocturnal systems. These systems of the imaginary are based on opposing worldviews, one identified to „heroic and purist“ structures, and the other to „intimate and merging“ structures. Only a third category of structures, called „synthetic“, and later „systemic“, can ensure that the opposing schemes of the imaginary reach a healthy harmony by maintaining themselves in the presence of each other without any will of exclusion. Diagram A presents an abridged version of the classification of these two major systems and of these three mythical universes.

Diagram A

Systems or polarities	Diurnal	Nocturnal	
Structures	Heroic	Synthetic or “systemic”	Mystical
Verbal schema	To distinguish	To link	To mix or to “confound”

**2. According to you, what are some points of contact which could show Gilbert Durand’s theory of the imaginary to be relevant in the field of Christian psychology?**

Before to answer this fundamental question, let’s recall that Greek philosophers were averse to the idea that imagination had the capacity of construing truth and guiding the human psyche. The Judeo-Christian tradition was also distrustful of the imagination, because it considered it the source of original sin and of evil in general, since it was too often associated with fantasy, idolatry and heresy. As a consequence, until quite recently, researchers, thinkers and academicians, and even theologians, have not given much attention to the play of imagination (and the imaginary) in their works. This comes as little surprise in Western civilization, for the greater part of its intellectual history has given pride of place to reason and rational thinking, not imagination. Many of us will think of Blaise Pascal’s view of the imagination as a spiritual

ainsi à contre-courant du positivisme qui souligne plutôt l’importance du monde des idées au détriment de la vie imaginative.

Selon Durand (1960 [1992]), il y a deux grands « régimes » de construction d’images mentales, visuelles et de récits, soit les régimes diurne et nocturne. Ces régimes de l’imaginaire fondent des visions opposées du monde, l’une identifiée à des structures « héroïques et puristes », et l’autre à des structures « intimistes et fusionnelles ». Seule une troisième catégorie de structures, nommée « synthétique », et plus tard « systémique », peut faire en sorte que les régimes opposés de l’imaginaire parviennent à une saine harmonie en se maintenant en présence l’un de l’autre sans volonté d’exclusion. Le diagramme A présente une version abrégée de la classification de ces deux grands systèmes et de ces trois univers mythiques.

Diagramme A

Régimes ou polarités	Diurne	Nocturne	
Structures	Héroïque	Synthétique	Mystique
Schémas verbaux	Distinguer	Relier	Confondre

**2. Selon vous, quels sont les points de contact qui pourraient démontrer comment la théorie de l’imaginaire de Gilbert Durand peut être pertinente pour le domaine de la psychologie chrétienne?**

Avant de répondre à cette question fondamentale, rappelons que les philosophes grecs étaient opposés à l’idée que l’imagination pouvait alimenter un discours sur la vérité et de ce fait, guider en quelque sorte la psyché humaine. La tradition judéo-chrétienne était aussi méfiante au sujet de l’imagination, car elle a estimé qu’elle était la source du péché originel et de mal en général, car elle a été trop souvent associée à la fantaisie, à l’idolâtrie et à l’hérésie. En conséquence, jusqu’à tout récemment, des chercheurs, des penseurs et des académiciens, et même des théologiens, n’ont pas donné beaucoup d’attention au rôle primordial de l’imagination (et de l’imaginaire) dans leurs

deceiver, among other thinkers [paradoxically, since he was quite brilliant in this famous quote: „The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing“].

In order to answer the question above, I will refer to some texts related to Christian psychology per se (in particular, Soldan, 2013; Johnson, 2007) along with some other examples taken from my own thoughts as a Christian psychotherapist working in various secular and pastoral settings.

First, as Soldan (2013) mentions : „ Christian Psychology seeks to take on psychological questions on the basis of fundamental presumptions that are in accordance with God’s revelation of himself through the Bible. The methods as well as the issues maintain a deeply relational dimension, i.e., disorder and healing must always be seen in the context of an existentially disturbed relationship dynamic between humans and/or between God and man and its restoration through God’s love. (p. 7)“.

This relational dimension (with oneself, others and God), so crucial in the Judeo-Christian paradigm, echoes partly the epistemological perspective of Durand’s theory on the imaginary which can be essentially seen as systemic (Yves Durand, 2011). In other words, the study of imaginary is only possible from the perspective of observing the existence of relationships between various symbolic elements in the context of a system.

Secondly, amongst the eight postulates developed by Johnson (2007) to treat with the epistemology of Christian psychology, three of them are of particular interest for the use of Durand’s theory (ASI : The anthropological structures of the imaginary) in the context of Christian psychology.

A) In the first part of postulate 1, Johnson (2007) points out that: « There are actually two related, coterminous fields of interests for a Christian psychology: 1) the empirical object of actual, individual human beings and their features ☒ and 2) God’s understanding and appraisal of that object (p. 8) ». The study of the imagina-

réflexions savantes. Cela vient n’est guère surprenant puisqu’au sein de la civilisation occidentale, et ce, pour la plus grande partie de son histoire intellectuelle, une place importante a été donnée la raison et à la pensée rationnelle, au détriment de l’imagination. Pensons ici à l’expression bien connue de Blaise Pascal sur l’imagination, qui la qualifiait de « maîtresse d’erreur et de fausseté » [paradoxalement, car il a été si brillant dans cette célèbre citation: « Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point »].

Afin de répondre à la question ci-dessus, je ferai référence à certains textes relatifs à la psychologie chrétienne (en particulier, Soldan, 2013; Johnson, 2007) ainsi qu’à d’autres exemples tirés de mes propres réflexions en tant que psychothérapeute chrétien ayant œuvré dans différents secteurs séculiers et pastoraux.

Premièrement, comme le souligne Soldan (2013) : « La psychologie chrétienne aborde des questions psychologiques à partir des prémisses fondamentales qui sont en conformité avec la révélation de Dieu lui-même à travers la Bible. Les méthodes ainsi que les questions abordées ont une dimension profondément relationnelle, par exemple, les désordres et la guérison doivent toujours être vus dans le contexte d’une relation dynamique existentiellement perturbée entre des humains et/ou entre Dieu et l’être humain et le rétablissement cette relation rendue possible grâce à l’amour de Dieu. » (p. 7). Cette dimension relationnelle (avec soi-même, les autres et Dieu), si cruciale dans le paradigme judéo-chrétien, fait écho en partie à la perspective épistémologique de la théorie de l’imaginaire de Durand qui peut être essentiellement considérée comme systémique (Yves Durand, 2011). En d’autres termes, l’étude de l’imaginaire est seulement rendue possible du point de vue de l’observation de l’existence de relations entre les divers éléments symboliques, dans le contexte d’un système.

Deuxièmement, parmi les huit postulats développés par Johnson (2007) pour traiter de l’épistémologie de la psychologie chrétienne, trois d’entre eux sont d’un intérêt particu-

ry is essential. As Côté (2003) has pointed out, our religious imagination is a key dimension for faith, the vital point of contact between divine revelation and human experience.

B) Johnson (2007) mentions in his third premise that: « Compared with modern psychology, Christian psychology has an expanded set of what counts as legitimate sources of psychological knowledge » (Johnson, 2007, p. 10). On this point, as mentioned earlier, because of Gilbert Durand's remarkable erudition, ASI takes into account the complexity of human nature. Johnson (2007) asserts that: "it desirable for psychologists to engage in interdisciplinary discussions with scientist and others who are investigating or describing features of human life. Many different disciplines can contribute to and enrich a Christian psychology, (...) neuroscience; computer science; comparative psychology; as well as (...) sociology, anthropology, (...) law, cultural studies, and linguistics. Literature (...) and other artistic media (...) can also uncover and illuminate psychological dynamics (Johnson, 2007, p. 13).

C) Johnson's fifth postulate mentions that: « Human nature in this age is of such divinely ordained complexity that it can only be properly grasped within a holistic, hierarchical, and interdependent set of orders of discourse: biological, psychosocial, ethical, and spiritual » (Johnson, 2007, p. 15). In light of this last point, it is worth again to mentioning that Durand's ASI is a global and encompassing theory which was developed within a multidisciplinary perspective.

As Côté (2003), an Oblate priest, theologian and stained-glass artist, has pointed out: „imagination (and imaginary) can be described as the climate of faith, the condition of its possibility: neither its ground nor its goal of perfection, but a penultimate instrument of grace in a world whose final salvation remains an object of hope. (...) therefore on the ability to 'see' beyond what meets the eye.“ (p. 9).

Moreover, the study of Durand's theory of imaginary allows us to consider some profound

lier pour l'utilisation de la théorie de Durand (SAI: Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire) dans le contexte de la psychologie chrétienne.

A) Dans la première partie du postulat 1 de Johnson (2007), cet auteur souligne qu' : « Il y a en fait deux domaines connexes d'intérêt pour une psychologie chrétienne: 1) l'objet empirique d'êtres humains individuels ainsi que leurs caractéristiques et 2) la compréhension de Dieu en tant qu'objet d'étude (p. 8) ». Or, l'étude de l'imaginaire est essentiel à cet effet, puisqu'à l'instar de Côté (2003), notre imagination religieuse est une dimension essentielle de la foi, le point de contact entre la révélation divine et l'expérience humaine.

B) Johnson (2007) mentionne dans sa troisième prémisse que : « Comparée à la psychologie moderne, la psychologie chrétienne possède un ensemble élargi de sources légitimes de connaissances psychologiques » (Johnson, 2007, p.10, notre traduction). Sur ce point, tel que mentionné plus tôt, en raison de l'érudition remarquable de Gilbert Durand, les SAI prennent en compte la complexité de la nature humaine. Johnson (2007) affirme qu' : « il est aussi désirable pour les psychologues de prendre part à des discussions interdisciplinaires avec des chercheurs scientifiques et d'autres qui enquêtent ou décrivent des aspects de la vie humaine. De nombreuses disciplines différentes peuvent contribuer à enrichir la psychologie chrétienne, (...) la neuroscience ; l'informatique ; la psychologie comparative ; tout comme (...) la sociologie, l'anthropologie, (...) le droit, les études culturelles, et la linguistique. La littérature (...) et d'autres médias artistiques (...) peuvent aussi découvrir et éclairer des dynamiques psychologiques » (Johnson, 2007, p.13, notre traduction).

C) À la cinquième prémisse, Johnson (2007) ajoute : « La nature humaine à notre époque est d'une telle complexité divinement ordonnée qu'elle peut seulement être saisie convenablement dans le cadre d'un ensemble d'ordres de discours holistiques, hiérarchiques et interdépendants : biologique, psychosocial, éthique,



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and intriguing aspects of Christianity, mostly, though, the notion of paradox, defined here as a statement that is seemingly absurd or self-contradictory or opposed to common sense, although one that may harbour a profound truth. Jesus' teachings, using various metaphors, parables, images, often challenge our common sense. For instance, the Beatitudes are better understood while appreciating paradox in our lives. On that note, Durand's theory of imaginary, presenting a third path, which he calls 'synthetic' (yet, later on, he preferred the term 'systemic') echoes the notion of paradox. In the context of Christianity, Côté (2003) provides some remarkable examples of paradox which are inherent to it: „ Do you believe, with Pierre de Berulle, that God 'is infinitely present and infinitely distant, infinitely elevated and infinitely close to us, infinitely desirable and infinitely insupportable?' (...) Do you believe the great German spiritual master Meister Eckhart when he says : 'Not to be able to reach God is our discovery; the failure itself is our success?'" (...) Do you believe Jesus when he tells the crowd on the mountainside, 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God'? (Luke 6:20) (p. 173-175).

Furthermore, Durand's systemic structure with its verbal schema „to link“ refers to the etymology of the Latin word *religare*, which also refers to the term „religion.“ The systemic structure is a structure and a dynamic system of images that allows for the coherence and complementarity of contrasts between the diurnal and nocturnal systems which contain the dreamlike function of changing the world in order to regain lost time. This symbol of the totality of the world is concretely represented by the cross which is a fundamental image of the ‚synthetic‘ structural pole meaning the union of opposites (Durand, 1960 [1992], p. 379). At the symbolic level, one can appreciate this profound and powerful symbol of the cross where it is possible to harmonize conflicting contradictions of time, that is to say the maddening fear before the passage of time and the anguish of nothingness to be transcended by faith in the fulfillment of the final time and salvation.

et spirituel » (p. 15, notre traduction). À la lumière de ces propos, il importe de mentionner que la théorie de l'imaginaire de Durand (SAI) est une théorie englobante qui a été développée dans une perspective pluridisciplinaire.

Comme Côté (2003), qui était à la fois prêtre oblat, théologien et artiste du vitrail, l'a souligné: « l'imagination (et l'imaginaire) peut être décrit comme le lieu de la foi, la condition de sa possibilité: non pas en termes de fondement ni en termes de visée de perfection, mais compris en termes d'un instrument ultime de la grâce dans un monde dont le salut final demeure un objet d'espérance. (...) donc en termes de la capacité de „voir“ au-delà de ce qui saute aux yeux. (p. 9, notre traduction).

En outre, l'étude de la théorie de l'imaginaire de G. Durand nous permet de tenir compte de certains aspects profonds et des plus intrigants du christianisme; notamment, la notion de paradoxe, définie ici comme une déclaration qui est apparemment absurde ou contradictoire en soi ou plutôt au sens commun, mais peut pourtant contenir une vérité profonde. Les enseignements de Jésus, qui utilisent diverses métaphores, paraboles, images, mettent souvent au défi notre sens commun. Par exemple, les Béatitudes se comprennent mieux lorsqu'on tient compte des paradoxes dans nos vies. À ces propos, la théorie de Durand de l'imaginaire, présentant une troisième voie, qu'il appelle «synthétique» (ou nommé plus tard, «systémique») fait écho à la notion de paradoxe. Dans le contexte du christianisme, Côté (2003) fournit quelques exemples remarquables inhérents à la notion de paradoxe :

«Croyez-vous, tout comme Pierre de Bérulle, que Dieu est infiniment présent et infiniment lointain, infiniment élevé et infiniment proche de nous, infiniment désirable et infiniment insupportable?» (...) Pensez-vous, tout comme le grand maître spirituel allemand Maître Eckhart, lorsqu'il dit: „Ne pas être en mesure d'atteindre Dieu est notre découverte; l'échec en lui-même est notre succès ?“ (...) Croyez-vous, tout comme Jésus quand il dit à la foule sur la montagne „Heureux êtes-vous qui sont les pauvres, car le royaume de Dieu?“ (Luc 6:20) (p. 173-175).

### **3. What was it about this theory that convinced you, what was important about it and caused you to adopt it?**

Prior to my studies in theology and in psychology, I had spent two years studying biochemistry, followed by two years in Medicine School. This background certainly made me appreciative of the rigour and the criteria of objectivity encountered in scientific disciplines, yet I often found that, at some levels, these systematic and analytical approaches were somehow too limited to fully understand human nature. Furthermore, although I took some interesting courses in theology that dealt more openly with spiritual questions, most of my theological studies were mostly focussing on rationality and conceptual thinking of God, and not so much about other ways of knowing various forms of religious and spiritual experiences. Lastly, most of my graduate training in psychology was research-based. Although I enjoy learning about scientific theories and empirical research, I had been searching for years for a theoretical framework that would be open to a multidisciplinary (even transdisciplinary) perspective. So far, Durand's theory and epistemology resonates with my interest in research. It provides a heuristic potential that can be relevant to intercultural studies as well as appropriate to deepen our study of spirituality and religiosity, and mostly, one that can transcend reductionist and/or dualistic Western thinking.

As a professor and researcher in the field of counseling, psychotherapist and spirituality, as a Christian psychologist who was trained in guided imagery, Durand's ASI resonates with my quest for a framework that would allow to take into account the important role of imaginary. Many characteristics of Durand's ASI strike me as remarkable. I was impressed by Durand's effort to provide a comprehensive inventory, a detailed catalogue of symbols, using various disciplines, from sciences to arts. Durand offers an innovative way of thinking, mostly from analogical thinking. For him, homo sapiens is more than a social animal (as portrayed in some psychological theories), rather a homo symbo-

En outre, la structure systémique de Durand avec son schéma verbal « relier » se réfère à l'étymologie du mot latin religare, qui fait aussi référence au terme « religion ». La structure systémique est une structure et un système dynamique d'images qui permet la cohérence et la complémentarité des contrastes entre les régimes diurne et nocturne qui contiennent la fonction onirique de changer le monde afin de regagner le temps perdu. Ce symbole de la totalité du monde est concrètement représenté par la croix qui est une image fondamentale du pôle structurel « synthétique » qui signifie l'union des contraires (Durand, 1960 [1992], p. 379). Au niveau symbolique, on peut apprécier ce symbole profond et puissant de la croix où il est possible d'harmoniser les contradictions conflictuelles du temps, à savoir la peur effrayante liée au passage du temps et l'angoisse du néant et de la mort, qui peuvent être transcendées par la foi en l'accomplissement de la fin des temps et du salut.

### **3. Qu'est-ce qu'il y avait dans cette théorie pour que vous soyez convaincu de sa pertinence ; qu'est-ce qu'il y avait d'important à propos de celle-ci qui vous a incité à l'adopter dans vos recherches ?**

Avant de poursuivre des études en théologie et en psychologie, j'avais étudié deux ans en biochimie et deux autres années à l'école de médecine. Ces quatre années d'études m'ont certainement fait apprécier la rigueur et les critères d'objectivité rencontrés dans les disciplines scientifiques, mais je constatais souvent qu'à certains niveaux, ces approches systématiques et analytiques été en quelque sorte trop limitées pour comprendre pleinement la nature humaine. En outre, bien que j'ai suivi quelques cours intéressants en théologie qui traitaient plus ouvertement des questions spirituelles, la plupart de mes études théologiques mettaient l'accent sur la rationalité dans la quête d'une compréhension notionnelle de Dieu, et moins sur d'autres façons de connaître diverses formes d'expériences religieuses et spirituelles. Enfin, la majorité de ma formation avancée en psychologie a été de nature empirique, fondée sur la recherche scientifique.

Bien que j'ai apprécié tous ces apprentissages des

licus.

My interest in pursuing research with Durand's theory of the imaginary goes back in the year 2007-2008, when I had the chance and joy to meet one of my intellectual mentors and friends, Raymond Laprée, a now retired full time (yet still quite active) professor of Saint Paul University. He has been for me a real 'passeur de l'imaginaire' in my life. With Laprée's teachings, I began to appreciate Durand's theory which has worldwide renown. I discovered that his theory was very interesting for symbolic language, myths, and cultural and religious references. Furthermore, because I was interested in empirical research, I was glad to discover that Durand's theory of the imaginary was empirically supported by a projective test, a measurement instrument, the AT.9, which means "Anthropological Test of the Imaginary with 9 elements". Developed by Yves Durand, following the works of Gilbert Durand, this empirical measurement, the AT.9, consolidated in numerous writings (Durand, 1963, 1984, 1988, 2005), makes it possible to evaluate the mythical universe, or a person's imaginary type. On that note, Raymond Laprée, who met both Gilbert Durand and Yves Durand, was helpful in helping my research team and me to get in contact with the two men.

As mentioned earlier, I was grateful to see that, on the practical level of psychosocial intervention, Durand's theory, because of its ease in dealing with cultural, symbolic, mythical and religious elements, can be useful and pertinent in expanding our understanding of the socio-cultural influences on psychological, religious and spiritual processes. Furthermore, from a biopsychological perspective, I can see the relevance of the synthetic structures which can be referred to as valid criteria for health and mental equilibrium or balance (Laprée, 2000), of the idea of progress and healthy growth. Lastly, I am still very interested in pursuing my research with a theory that has a heuristic potential for intercultural studies, and can embrace paradox. For instance, in the „synthetic“ structural pole, there are four significant systemic sub-structures: 1) the harmonization of opposites; 2) the preservation of contrasts; 3) the dissemi-

théories scientifiques et des recherches empiriques, je cherchais depuis des années un cadre théorique qui serait ouvert à une perspective multidisciplinaire (même transdisciplinaire). Jusqu'à présent, c'est la théorie et l'épistémologie de Gilbert Durand qui résonnent le mieux avec mon intérêt pour la recherche. Cette théorie fournit un potentiel heuristique qui peut être pertinent pour les études interculturelles ainsi que pour approfondir l'étude de la spiritualité et de religiosité. Par surcroît, cette théorie permet de transcender une pensée occidentale en psychologie scientifique, parfois qualifiée de « réductionniste » et/ou « dualiste ».

En tant que professeur et chercheur dans le domaine du counseling, de la psychothérapie et de la spiritualité, et en tant que psychologue chrétien qui a été formé en imagerie guidée, la théorie de G. Durand (SAI) fait écho à ma quête d'un cadre théorique qui permettrait de prendre en compte le rôle important de l'imaginaire. De nombreuses caractéristiques de cette théorie de G. Durand m'interpellent. Je suis impressionné par l'effort déployé par G. Durand pour fournir un inventaire complet, un catalogue détaillé des symboles, en utilisant diverses disciplines, des sciences aux arts. Durand propose une façon novatrice de réfléchir, notamment à partir de la pensée analogique. Pour lui, l'homo sapiens est plus qu'un animal social (comme le prétendent certaines théories psychologiques), il est plutôt homo symbolicus, un être de symboles.

Mon intérêt dans la poursuite de la recherche inspirée de la théorie de l'imaginaire de Durand remonte à l'année académique 2007-2008, quand j'ai eu la chance et la joie de rencontrer l'un de mes mentors intellectuels et amis, Raymond Laprée, maintenant retraité (mais toujours très actif), ancien professeur de l'Université Saint-Paul. Il a été pour moi un véritable « passeur de l'imaginaire » dans ma vie. Avec les enseignements de Laprée, j'ai commencé à apprécier la théorie de Durand, reconnue mondialement. J'ai découvert que sa théorie était très intéressante puisqu'elle tenait compte du langage symbolique, des mythes, et des références culturelles et religieuses. En outre, parce que j'étais aussi intéressé à la recherche empirique, j'étais heu-

nation through time; 4) the hypotyposis of the future which is made present and controlled by the imagination in the repetitive act of creation. These structures are characterized in several myths from diverse cultural traditions (monotheistic and polytheistic) through the implementation of the „coincidentia oppositorum“.

**4. Our imaginary has a fundamental influence on our individual understanding, experiencing and intervention in this world. This would also mean that it makes an impact on our experience and insights in faith. Would you see it this way in relation to e.g. our image of God, our understanding of forgiveness or of love?**

This relevant question implies some epistemological clarifications. According to Wunenburger (2013), G. Durand's epistemological approach is based on three axioms.

I will use these three axioms to develop my answer.

The first axiom focuses on the affirmation of Durand's master, which postulates that: „the images that are raw psychic forces are stronger than ideas, stronger than the actual experiences“ (Bachelard, 1948, p. 20, our translation). Therefore, these „(...) images, [are] loaded with ambivalent emotions and symbolic correlates, organized into coherent networks which feed all symbolic expressions. The result is that human rationality is always acquired second.“ (Wunenburger, 2013, p. 9, our translation).

Upon the acceptance of Durand's first axiom comes the acknowledgement that the underpinning of rationality is imaginary. On a developmental point of view, this does not mean that rationality evolves in an opposite direction to the imaginary, nor does it mean that it is not important in one's understanding of God. It means that we can not fully appreciate the experience of God if we do not try to find the links between imagination (the imaginary) and faith. The appreciation of the image of God, the understanding of forgiveness and love, require the acknowledgment of the role of rationality and will, but also the precious influence of imaginary as a most relevant underpinning of such

reux de découvrir que la théorie de l'imaginaire de Durand avait été empiriquement appuyée par un test projectif, un instrument de mesure, l'AT.9, qui signifie « Test Anthropologique avec 9 éléments ». Développée par Yves Durand, suite aux travaux de Gilbert Durand, cette mesure empirique, l'AT.9, consolidée en de nombreux écrits (Durand, 1963, 1984, 1988, 2005), permet d'évaluer l'univers mythique, ou le type d'imaginaire d'une personne. À ces propos, Raymond Laprée, qui a rencontré Gilbert Durand et Yves Durand, nous a été utile, à mon équipe de recherche et à moi, en nous aidant à entrer en contact avec ces deux hommes.

Comme déjà mentionné plus tôt, j'ai été reconnaissant de constater que, sur le plan pratique de l'intervention psychosociale, la théorie de Durand, en raison de son aisance à traiter des éléments culturels, symboliques, mythiques et religieux, pouvait être utile et pertinente pour élargir notre compréhension des influences socioculturelles sur les processus psychologiques, religieux et spirituels. En outre, dans une perspective biopsychologique, je peux voir la pertinence des structures synthétiques qui peuvent représenter des critères valables pour désigner l'équilibre psychologique et la santé mentale (Laprée, 2000), l'idée de progrès et de saine croissance psycho-spirituelle. Enfin, je suis toujours très intéressé à poursuivre mes recherches avec cette théorie qui a un potentiel heuristique pour les études interculturelles, et qui peut considérer les paradoxes. Par exemple, dans le pôle structurel « synthétique », on identifie quatre structures systémiques significatives : 1) l'harmonisation des contraires; 2) le maintien des contrastes; 3) la dissémination dans le temps; 4) l'hypotypose du futur qui est présentifié et maîtrisé par l'imagination dans l'acte répétitif de la création. Ces structures se caractérisent dans plusieurs mythes des diverses traditions culturelles (monothéiste et polythéiste) par la mise en œuvre de la « coincidentia oppositorum ».

**4. Notre imaginaire exerce une influence fondamentale sur notre compréhension in-**



Temptation in Eden

human faculties.

Concerning Durand's second axiom, it refers to „ (...) the „archetypal depth“ of these images: „These images are not simply the result of initial perceptions which would thereby be weakened by their mimetic repetition (...), but are at once themselves endowed with symbolic valences (...), integrated into constellations of figurative meaning (...). Sometimes these images even reach the rank of archetypes (...) (Wunenburger, 2013, p. 9, our translation).

In a sense, this point would resonate with Jungian perspective on the experience of God through the experience of the divine archetype. Carl G. Jung, who inspired Gilbert Durand, left us this famous quote: „Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.“

Durand's third axiom focuses on the temporality – under both the Eastern and Western conceptions of time – of the imaginary which comes in the form of functions designed primarily to help tame the passing of time and deal with the existential anguish of death: „Finally, the imaginary is basically a temporal psychic activity, that is to say both subject to time and able to challenge the destructive time exposing us to death.“ (Wunenburger, 2013, p. 9, our translation).

In regards to this third axiom, and particularly the idea of the ‘imaginary as capable of challenging the destructive time exposing us to death’, it resonates as a true originality of Durand's theory. Durand provides a „figurative“ meaning of imaginary, in contrast with Levi-Strauss's meaning (which refers only to a sociological understanding of human imaginary) and Paul Ricoeur (which tends to seek the explanation of salvation in a historical time); for Durand, the explanation of salvation has more to do with the eschatological time (see Laprée, 2000, pp. 336-339). By saying this, I refer to the Christian thought on the Resurrection (the denial of eternal death) and the Judgment of the End Times. Furthermore, this third axiom allows me to reflect on the experience of forgiveness and the experience of love. As time is essential to fully understand these spiritual realities, I am still ‘touched’ as I think of part of the Pater

**dividuelle, notre manière d'expérimenter et d'agir dans le monde. Cela signifie également qu'il influe sur notre expérience et sur notre manière d'intuitionner la foi. Voyez-vous cela de cette manière en relation à, par exemple, notre image de Dieu, notre compréhension du pardon ou de l'amour?**

Quelques points épistémologiques peuvent éclairer cette question pertinente. Selon Wunenburger (2013), la démarche épistémologique de Durand repose sur trois axiomes. Le premier axiome porte sur l'affirmation du maître de Durand, qui postule que: «les images qui sont des forces psychiques premières sont plus fortes que les idées, plus fortes que les expériences réelles» (Bachelard, 1948, p. 20). Dès lors, ces« (...) images, [sont] chargées d'affects et de corrélats symboliques ambivalents, organisées en réseaux cohérents qui nourrissent toutes les expressions symboliques. Il en résulte que la rationalité de l'homme est toujours acquise, seconde.» (Wunenburger, 2013, p. 9). En acceptant ce premier axiome de Durand vient la reconnaissance du fait que les fondements de la rationalité ont leur origine dans l'imaginaire. D'un point de vue développemental, cela ne signifie pas que la rationalité évolue dans une direction opposée à l'imaginaire, pas plus qu'elle n'est pas importante dans la compréhension de Dieu. Cela signifie plutôt que nous ne pouvons pas apprécier pleinement l'expérience de Dieu si nous ne tentons pas de trouver les liens entre l'imagination (l'imaginaire) et de la foi. L'appréciation de l'image de Dieu, la compréhension du pardon et de l'amour, sont des réalités qui font certes appel à la reconnaissance du rôle de la rationalité et de la volonté, mais aussi à l'influence primordiale de l'imaginaire en tant que fondement des plus pertinents de ces facultés humaines.

En ce qui concerne le deuxième axiome, celui-ci réfère à la « profondeur archétypale » de ces images : « Ces images ne résultent pas uniquement de perceptions premières qui seraient de ce fait affaiblies par leur reprise mimétique (...), mais se voient d'emblée dotées de valences symboliques (...), intégrées dans des constellations de sens figurés (...). Parfois même ces images accèdent au rang d'archétypes (...) »

Noster's: „and forgive us our trespasses, AS we forgive those who trespass against us“. In reference to Jesus Christ's prayer, one can see how forgiveness (along with love) is better explained by the term 'AS'. The „AS“ is a word of comparison that can open the entire field of the imaginary. It appears to me as one of the fundamental keys to the Christian understanding of the relationship with God. I could also reflect further on Jesus' teachings on „loving your neighbor AS yourself,“ or better yet, in my opinion, with this sentence, „Love your enemies“. Facing hurts, betrayal (any wounds), how can someone overcome the human tendency towards justice to open up to the path of love? This echoes the work of an imaginative explanation (not only based on sensitive facts) to get there!

Furthermore, in relation to our understanding of love, while reason and empirical science tend to divide and separate, the imaginary can unify and assumes connection and attraction. As mentioned previously, the imaginary seen as the „inner creative force of imagination“, and also as “a system, a dynamic function of organizing images, that gives them soundness and correlates them”: this can be seen as the site for perceiving and exploring certain aspects of human nature that are somehow empirically indemonstrable, — such as the connectedness of love, the attraction of the beloved for the lover; the unrelenting choice of a partner who has nothing rational to recommend him or her; belief in God or the numinous, — all these can not be fully explained by reason alone. However, they are quite understandable from the perspective of the imaginary (and imagination), which fills up the empty spaces with images and symbols, which make sense of interconnections.

In relation to the exploration of spirituality, Belhumeur, Deschênes and Malette (2012), based on the book by Côté (2003) which deals with imagination in *Imagination in Today's Spiritual Wilderness*, also suggested a brief theological reflection on the importance of considering the imaginary in the development of faith. In his book, Côté (2003) develops three main elements of contemporary spirituality. To begin with, the first element relates to the sense of adventure

(Wunenburger, 2013, p. 9). Dans un sens, ce point fait écho à la perspective jungienne qui décrit l'expérience possible de Dieu à travers l'expérience de l'archétype divin. Carl G. Jung, qui a inspiré Gilbert Durand, nous a laissé cette célèbre citation: „Votre vision ne s'éclaircira que lorsque vous irez voir dans votre cœur. (...) Qui regarde à l'extérieur rêve. Qui regarde à l'intérieur s'éveille ».

Le troisième axiome de Durand porte sur la temporalité - relevant à la fois des conceptions occidentale et orientale du temps - de l'imaginaire qui se décline en des fonctions visant essentiellement à aider à apprivoiser le temps qui passe et à faire face à l'angoisse existentielle de la mort: «Enfin, l'imaginaire est fondamentalement une activité psychique temporelle, c'est-à-dire à la fois soumise au temps et capable de défier le temps destructeur qui nous expose à la mort.» (Wunenburger, 2013, p. 9).

En ce qui concerne ce troisième axiome, et en particulier l'idée de l'«imaginaire qui est capable de défier le temps destructeur qui nous expose à la mort», cela représente la véritable originalité de la théorie de Durand. Pour lui, l'imaginaire possède un sens «figuratif», en contraste avec le sens de C. Lévi-Strauss (qui se réfère uniquement à une compréhension sociologique de l'imaginaire humain) et Paul Ricoeur (qui a tendance à chercher l'explication du salut dans un temps historique); pour Durand, l'explication du salut a plus à voir avec le temps eschatologique (voir Laprée, 2000, pp. 336-339). En disant cela, je me réfère à la pensée chrétienne sur la Résurrection (la négation de la mort éternelle) et au jugement de la Fin des Temps. En outre, ce troisième axiome me permet de réfléchir sur l'expérience du pardon et de l'expérience de l'amour. Comme la notion du temps est essentielle pour bien comprendre ces réalités spirituelles, je suis toujours «touché» lorsque je pense à cette partie du Pater Noster: «Pardonne-nous nos offenses, COMME nous pardonnons à ceux qui nous ont offensés». En référence à cette prière de Jésus-Christ, on peut voir comment le pardon (ainsi que l'amour) sont mieux expliqués par le terme «COMME». Le «COMME» est un terme de comparaison qui

which reminds us of the typical attributes (cf. struggle, fight) of the mythical universe of the heroic type. Secondly, the author also invites us to learn to admit our vulnerability. This seems to correspond to the mystical universe which evokes and favours an attitude of interiority and intimacy, so essential to comforting, protection, the quest for a state of well-being in a quiet space fostering admission of our fragility. Finally, Côté (2003) suggests a third and final element to an emerging spirituality of the desert, that is to say, the new interconnections. Côté argues that the numerous metaphors used by the new post-modern themes in theology and science, such as the eco-feminism movement or that of alternative medicines, well illustrate this idea of a complex world where things and beings are inter-connected. There is here a possible link to be made with the synthetic type of mythical universe which is always looking to connect, to combine the two other universes, heroic and mystical.

Lastly, in regards to the relation of the imaginary with the images of God, I will refer to Nguyen's (2014) doctoral thesis, for which I was the thesis director. In her recent doctoral thesis, Nguyen (2014) examined the relationships between images of God, resilience and the imaginary category in the face of loss among Vietnamese immigrants living in Canada. In earlier literature, the use of Western measurements to examine the constructs of images of God, of loss, and of resilience yielded inconsistent results because of cultural differences. Her thesis therefore adopted Object Relations Theory, together with Durand's Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary; these two culturally sensitive theoretical approaches suggested that a higher level of Positive Images of God and the synthetic category of the imaginary would be related to better health and psychological outcomes across cultures. With a mixed method using quantitative and qualitative approaches, Nguyen (2014) showed that the imaginary categories were associated with a positive perception of God; and were negatively associated with somatization, intrusion and hyper-vigilance. The study suggested that the Vietnamese immigrants whose images of God reflected love, comfort,

fait écho et s'ouvre sur l'ensemble du domaine de l'imaginaire. Il me semble qu'il s'agit ici de l'une des clés fondamentales de la compréhension chrétienne de la relation à Dieu. Je pourrais aussi faire référence à d'autres enseignements de Jésus tels qu'«aimer son prochain comme soi-même», ou mieux encore, à mon avis, à cette phrase: «Aimez vos ennemis». Devant le mal, la trahison (des blessures), comment une personne peut-elle surmonter sa tendance humaine de réagir qu'en empruntant le chemin de la justice pour s'ouvrir au chemin de l'amour? Pour y arriver, il importe de faire appel à une explication imaginative (et pas seulement une explication basée sur des faits sensibles)!

En outre, en ce qui concerne notre compréhension de l'amour, alors que la raison et la science empirique ont tendance à diviser et distinguer les choses, l'imaginaire peut unifier et assumer des connexions et des rapprochements. Tel que mentionné précédemment, l'imaginaire en tant que « force créatrice interne de l'imagination », et aussi en tant que « système, une fonction dynamique d'organisation des images, qui leur donne la cohérence et assure entre elles une corrélation »; l'imaginaire peut être considéré comme le lieu pour percevoir et explorer certains aspects de la nature humaine. Des aspects qui seraient en quelque sorte empiriquement indémonstrables - tels que la connexion vécue dans l'amour, l'attraction de la bien-aimée pour son amant; le choix d'un partenaire de vie dont les motifs ne sont pas tous rationnels; la croyance en Dieu ou du numineux, -toutes expériences ne peuvent pas être seulement expliquées par la raison. Cependant, elles sont tout à fait compréhensibles du point de vue de l'imaginaire (et l'imagination), qui permet de remplir les espaces vides avec des images et des symboles, offrant ainsi un sens.

En ce qui concerne l'exploration de la spiritualité, Bellehumeur, Deschênes et Malette (2012), en s'appuyant sur l'ouvrage de Côté (2003) qui traite de l'imagination dans *Imagination in Today's Spiritual Wilderness*, ont aussi proposé une brève réflexion théologique sur l'importance de considérer l'imaginaire dans le développement de la foi. Dans son livre, Côté

protection, and trust had higher scores on resilience (i.e., self efficacy, adaptation, purpose and resourcefulness), lower scores on somatization, anxiety, hostility, and higher scores on the synthetic value index (the highest score corresponds to the elaborate synthetic category).

**5. Or, to put it another way: to what extent does the imaginary influence (alongside our hermeneutic enquiries) our understanding of the Biblical revelations?**

With this in mind, the Christian psychologist can embrace the view of human being, seen as a homo symbolicus, in relation to God and march forward with a sure understanding of the nature of human existence, the command to love, and an imagination for the realization of the impossible. This makes sense since : „the biblical basis given for humanity’s transcendent quality is that, according scripture, humans are made in God’s image, and thus carry the faculty of transcendence, including the capacities for self-reflection and reason.“ (Isaacson, 2013, p. 11). However, transcendence is not only given, but also required by God. Inspired by Niebuhr (1941), Isaacson (2013) explains that as image bearers of God, humans may discern between good and evil, using both revelation and reason. Isaacson (2013) would add that this ability to discern good and evil, combined with the divine love imperative, indicates that humans are both able and required to transcend the tensions of earthly circumstance (cf. their biological conditioning) as they reach towards the divine example of self-transcending love. However, this capacity for transcendence always stands in tension with the biological nature of humans.

Furthermore, Isaacson (2013) states that the transition from a unimodal view of human nature (e.g. seeing human being as only bio-social beings) to a more symbolic and religious way of looking at the human person (such as a Christian view) resonates with a dialectical view (biological roots and spiritual self, such as transcendence) facilitating two main postures in the Christian psychologist: possibility and imagination.

(2003) y développe trois principaux éléments de cette spiritualité contemporaine. Dans un premier temps, le premier élément se rapporte au sens de l’aventure qui n’est pas sans nous rappeler les attributs typiques (cf. lutter, combattre) de l’univers mythique de type héroïque. Dans un deuxième temps, l’auteur nous invite aussi à apprendre à nous approprier notre vulnérabilité. Cela semble correspondre à l’univers mystique qui évoque et privilégie une attitude d’intériorité et d’intimité, si essentielle au réconfort, à la protection, à la quête d’un état de bien-être dans un espace paisible favorisant l’appropriation de notre fragilité. Enfin, dans un troisième temps, Côté (2003) propose un troisième et dernier élément lié à une spiritualité émergente du désert, c’est-à-dire, celui des nouvelles interconnexions. Il soutient que les nombreuses métaphores utilisées par les nouveaux thèmes post-modernes en théologie et en science, comme le mouvement de l’éco-féminisme ou celui des médecines douces, illustrent bien cette idée d’un monde complexe où les choses et les êtres sont inter reliés entre eux. Il y a ici un rapprochement possible à faire avec l’univers mythique de type synthétique qui cherche sans cesse à relier, à conjuguer les deux autres univers, héroïque et mystique.

Enfinement, en ce qui concerne la relation de l’imaginaire avec les images de Dieu, je vais me référer à la thèse doctorale de Than Tu Nguyen (2014) que j’ai dirigée. Dans cette récente thèse, Nguyen (2014) a examiné les liens entre l’image de Dieu, la résilience et l’imaginaire des immigrants vietnamiens vivant au Canada, ayant vécu des pertes. Dans la recension de la documentation, il a été remarqué que l’utilisation de méthodes de mesure occidentales pour examiner les construits de l’image de Dieu, de la perte et de la résilience ont donné des résultats contradictoires à cause des différences culturelles. Or, dans sa thèse, Nguyen a donc adopté les théories de la relation d’objet, conjointement à celle des structures anthropologiques de l’imaginaire de Durand, deux approches théoriques culturellement sensibles. Les résultats ont indiqué que, chez une même personne, une image de Dieu positive est liée au pôle synthétique de l’imaginaire, et que ces

„It facilitates possibility in the sense that a view of humans as both finite and creative promotes the application of both compassion and challenge in the therapeutic context. Furthermore, in regards to imagination, a dialectical view that takes seriously the twin realities of the incarnation and the divine love imperative enables a clinician to reasonably hold onto hope in the absurd on behalf of the client.“ (Isaacson, 2013, p. 18).

Furthermore, with respect to the influence of the imaginary in our understanding of Biblical revelations, I would complete my answer with these two quotes. First, I agree with Brenner (1990) when he states: „When a person goes through a process or series of events called conversion or spiritual transformation, it is the imagination that is being most influenced. (...) But the most alive and active force in the conversion process is the imagination. (...) In Christian conversion, a person experiences a shift from personally created or appropriated dominant images, or images offered to us by the consumer culture around us, to the dominant images of Jesus. (...), Jesus used the metaphor of the kingdom of God or the reign of God to summarize and communicate these dominant images. Among the dominant images of Jesus are: equality among persons, prophetic action against personal and systemic evil; mercy; forgiveness; justice; prayerfulness; (...). To sum up, (...) The imagination is a network of dominant images that energize or motivate us. „ (pp, 5-6).

Finally, in his book : *Lazarus! Come Out! Why Faith needs Imagination*, Côté (2003) has clearly pointed out : „ Because of the enormous distance that separates us from the founding events of Christianity and the great culture shift we are experiencing in our world today, a bold creative act of the Christian imagination is required to interpret the gospel anew for our rapidly changing times. Without such a creative and imaginative reinterpretation, it is doubtful we can survive in our new spiritual wilderness. „ (pp. 9-10). Later on, Côté (2003) would link imagination, play and Christian faith: „It is my contention that the two central features of play [also of the imaginary, our addition] – its ability

deux dimensions sont reliées à une meilleure santé et des conséquences psychologiques plus favorables. À l'aide d'une méthode mixte utilisant des approches quantitatives et qualitatives, Nguyen (2014) a démontré que : les catégories imaginaires durandiennes sont associées à l'image (positive) de Dieu, et que ces catégories imaginaires sont négativement corrélées à la somatisation, à l'intrusion et à l'hyper vigilance. Cette recherche suggère que les immigrants vietnamiens qui ont des images de Dieu reflétant l'amour, le confort, la protection et la confiance, ont des scores plus élevés de résilience (dont l'auto-efficacité, l'adaptation, des buts, des ressources), et des scores plus bas en matière de somatisation, d'anxiété, d'hostilité, et des scores plus élevés sur l'indice de la valeur synthétique (un score élevé correspondant au pôle synthétique le plus élaboré).

### **5. En d'autres mots, jusqu'à quel point l'imaginaire (ainsi que nos démarches herméneutiques) influence(nt)-(t)-il(s) notre compréhension des révélations bibliques?**

Le psychologue chrétien qui considère la personne humaine, en tant qu'homo symbolicus, peut entrevoir que sa relation à Dieu et sa quête spirituelle reposent sur une compréhension fondée de la nature de l'existence humaine, qui est de vivre selon le commandement de l'amour, et que l'imagination favorise la réalisation de l'impossible. Cela est logique, car : « d'un point de vue biblique, la qualité transcendante donnée à l'humanité est que, selon l'Écriture, les humains sont créés à l'image de Dieu, et donc portent en eux-mêmes la faculté de transcendance, y compris les capacités d'autoréflexion et la raison » (Isaacson, 2013, p. 11, notre traduction). Cependant, la transcendance est non seulement donnée, mais aussi demandée par Dieu. Inspiré par Niebuhr (1941), Isaacson (2013) explique en tant qu'êtres créés à l'image de Dieu, les humains peuvent discerner entre le bien et le mal, utilisant à la fois la révélation et la raison. Isaacson (2013) ajoute que cette capacité à discerner le bien et le mal, combinée avec l'amour impératif divin, indique que les êtres humains sont à la fois capables et sont appelés à transcender les tensions découlant des circonstances terrestres (cf. leur conditionnement biologique) pour

to absorb us into the structure of its very movement and its being a tantalizing experience with possibility – are two of the more characteristic features of Christian faith. „ (pp. 106-107).

**6. Could this also mean that I should adopt a different basic attitude towards a client in the category “heroic” as opposed to one in the category “mystical” (according to the archetypal test AT.9) in counselling or therapy?**

As a researcher and psychologist who operates with a Christian view of human nature, I was looking for a theoretical approach that could resonate with the importance of offering to students and clients both compassion (i.e. mystical regime) and challenge (i.e. heroic regime) towards the realization of a greater good in their lives and relationships, and propose an optimal way concerning mental health (i.e. synthetic structure).

On the subject, I wrote one article trying to show the relevance of Durand’s theory in the context of spiritual development and psychotherapy. Bellehumeur (2011) focuses on the contribution of the imaginary in understanding the relationship between resilience and spirituality. To overcome an all too „psychologizing“ perspective of the common processes of resilience and spirituality, this reflection takes the sociocultural influences into account. The Durandian theory makes it possible to qualify and deepen the possible connections between resiliency and spirituality. This article illustrates that, in a given resilience situation, it is sometimes better to encourage the transition from the mystical mythical universe to the heroic universe, while, in another case, it is the reverse transition which would be more favourable for the person. In short, the Durandian Theory of the Imaginary provides a conceptual framework to better understand how resilience can be either compromised (e.g. if the person finds himself in an imaginary located in one of the two extreme poles, heroic or mystical) or optimized (e.g. if the mythical world of the person is of the synthetic type).

In sum, it would be appropriate to adopt a dif-

tendre de plus en plus vers le divin, c’est-à-dire, vers un amour (de soi) transcendant. Cependant, cette capacité de transcendance demeure toujours en tension avec la nature biologique des humains.

En outre, Isaacson (2013) affirme que la transition d’une vision unimodale de la nature humaine (par exemple, concevoir l’être humain uniquement en tant qu’être biosocial) à une vision plus symbolique et religieuse de considérer la personne humaine (c’est-à-dire d’un point de vue chrétien) fait écho à une perspective dialectique (qui tient compte à la fois des racines biologiques et du moi spirituel, transcendant). Cette perspective permet ainsi le maintien de deux dimensions importantes pour le psychologue chrétien: la possibilité et l’imagination.

*„Cela permet la possibilité dans le sens où le fait de concevoir la personne humaine en tant qu’être fini et créatif favorise la pratique de la compassion et de la confrontation [envers les clients] dans le contexte thérapeutique. En outre, en ce qui concerne l’imagination, une vue dialectique qui prend au sérieux les doubles réalités de l’incarnation et de l’amour impératif divin permet à un clinicien de raisonnablement continuer d’espérer dans l’absurdité, et ce, au nom de son client ». (Isaacson, 2013, p. 18, notre traduction).*

En outre, par rapport à l’influence de l’imaginaire dans notre compréhension de la révélation biblique, je complèterais ma réponse en faisant appel à ces deux citations suivantes. Premièrement, je suis d’accord avec Brenner (1990) quand il affirme:

*«Quand une personne vit un processus ou une série d’événements appelés conversion ou transformation spirituelle, c’est l’imagination qui est le plus souvent influencée. (...) Mais la force la plus vivante et active dans le processus de conversion est l’imagination. (...) En ce qui concerne la conversion chrétienne, une personne expérimente un changement à partir d’images dominantes personnellement créées, ou d’images qui nous sont offertes par la culture de consommation qui nous entoure, vers des images dominantes de Jésus. (...), Jésus a utilisé la métaphore du royaume de Dieu ou du règne de Dieu pour résumer et communiquer ces images dominantes. Parmi les*



Jonah

ferent basic attitude towards a client depending on his or her identified mythical category (e.g., “heroic” or “mystical”, as measured by the AT.9) in counselling or in psychotherapy. Moreover, while it is true that the exercise of reflection, intelligence and acts of will are sought in any healing process, in order to foster holistic healing, it is important to consider the fact that the imaginary (and imagination and sensory) also come into play. As for the imaginary, the two functions of it consist of a memory of the past and a projection into a possible future. The imaginary allows us to rotate between mind and body, it is the effective bridge between the sensory and the spiritual in us. For instance, the practice of mental imagery (guided or not), seen as a psychotherapeutic technique, is most effective for many people.

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*images dominantes de Jésus, on retrouve : l'égalité entre les personnes, l'action prophétique contre le mal personnel et systémique; la miséricorde, le pardon, la justice, l'esprit de prière; (...) Pour résumer (...). L'imagination est un réseau d'images dominantes qui nous dynamisent ou nous motivent» (pp, 5-6, notre traduction).*

Enfin, dans son livre: *Lazarus! Come Out! Why Faith needs Imagination*, Côté (2003) a clairement souligné:

*«En raison de l'énorme distance qui nous sépare des événements fondateurs du christianisme et le grand changement culturel que nous vivons dans notre monde d'aujourd'hui, un acte de création audacieux de l'imagination chrétienne est nécessaire pour interpréter d'une nouvelle manière l'Évangile pour notre époque en évolution rapide. Sans une telle réinterprétation créative et imaginative, il est douteux que nous puissions survivre dans notre nouveau désert spirituel» (pp. 9-10, notre traduction). Plus loin, Côté (2003) resserre les liens entre l'imagination, le jeu et la foi chrétienne: «j'affirmerais que les deux éléments centraux du jeu [aussi de l'imaginaire, notre ajout] - sa capacité à nous absorber dans la structure de son propre mouvement et sa nature d'une expérience palpitante du possible - sont deux des traits caractéristiques de la foi chrétienne» (pp. 106-107, notre traduction).*

#### **6. Est-ce cela pourrait aussi signifier qu'on devrait adopter une attitude de base différente envers un(e) client(e) ayant un imaginaire de type “héroïque” ou à l'opposé, envers quelqu'un ayant un imaginaire de type “mystique” (selon l'AT.9) en counselling ou en psychothérapie?**

En tant que chercheur et psychologue qui possède une vision chrétienne de la nature humaine, je cherchais une approche théorique qui pouvait résonner avec l'importance d'offrir aux étudiant(e)s et aux client(e)s que je rencontrais, à la fois la compassion (cf. le régime mystique) et la mise au défi (cf. le régime héroïque) afin de tendre vers la réalisation d'un plus grand bien dans leur vie et leurs relations, et de proposer une manière optimale d'acquiescer et maintenir la santé mentale (cf. la structure synthétique). Sur ce sujet, j'ai écrit un article qui a tenté de

l'imaginaire." Dans Y. Durand, J.-P. Sironneau, A.F. Araujo (éds.). Variations sur l'imaginaire. L'épistémologie ouverte de Gilbert Durand. Orientations et innovations. (pp. 139-165). Bruxelles, Belgique. E.M.E.

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montrer la pertinence de la théorie de Durand dans le contexte du développement spirituel et de la psychothérapie. En effet, Bellehumeur (2011) s'intéresse à l'apport de l'imaginaire dans la compréhension des rapports entre la résilience et la spiritualité. Pour dépasser une perspective trop «psychologisante» des processus communs de la résilience et de la spiritualité, cette réflexion tient compte des influences socioculturelles. La théorie durandienne permet de nuancer et d'approfondir les rapprochements possibles entre la résilience et la spiritualité. Cet article permet d'illustrer que selon une situation de résilience donnée, parfois il vaut mieux encourager le passage de l'univers mythique mystique vers l'univers héroïque alors que dans une autre situation, c'est le passage inverse qui serait plus favorable pour la personne. En somme, la théorie durandienne de l'imaginaire offre un cadre conceptuel permettant de bien saisir en quoi la résilience peut être soit compromise (par ex. si la personne se retrouve dans un imaginaire localisé dans l'un des deux pôles extrêmes, héroïque ou mystique), soit optimisée (ex. si l'univers mythique de la personne est de type synthétique).

En somme, il serait approprié d'adopter une attitude de base différente envers un(e) client(e) en fonction de sa catégorie mythique identifiée (par exemple, « héroïque » ou « mystique », tel que mesuré par le AT.9) en counseling ou en psychothérapie. En outre, alors qu'il est vrai que l'exercice de la réflexion, de l'intelligence et des actes de volonté sont tous requis dans tout processus de guérison, afin de favoriser la guérison holistique, il est important de tenir compte du fait que l'imaginaire (ainsi que l'imagination et la dimension sensorielle) entre(nt) également en jeu. Quant à l'imaginaire, les deux fonctions de celui-ci se consistent à une mémoire du passé et à une projection dans un avenir possible. L'imaginaire nous permet de pivoter entre l'esprit et le corps, il est le pont efficace entre le sensoriel et le spirituel en nous. Par exemple, la pratique de l'imagerie mentale (guidée ou non), considérée comme une technique psychothérapeutique, est des plus efficaces pour de nombreuses personnes.

**Werner May**

## **On the Articles by David G. Benner: Invitation to a Journey**

On his website, [www.drdauidgbenner.ca](http://www.drdauidgbenner.ca), David G. Benner writes the following below the outline of his professional career as a psychologist:

“This isn’t the person with whom I primarily identify. But it is certainly part of my story and may, therefore, be of interest.”

What has happened when someone who has had responsible tasks and teaching posts at many universities, who has set up a number of counseling and therapeutic centers, who is listed in Who’s Who, not to mention his more than 20 books, of which many have been translated into numerous languages ... what has happened when someone expresses himself this way?

A first answer can perhaps be found in this statement about 20 years of his professional activities: “I discovered the great advantage of reading not those with whom I was most likely to agree but rather those with whom I was most likely to be stimulated to think ...” These mental stimuli were the beginning of his own spiritual journey, as David G. Benner calls it today. And he himself wonders if perhaps a midlife-crisis at some point raised new questions: “I had lots of thoughts and opinions about God. But I had very little experience of God. ... And what I longed for was authentic knowing of God, not simply construals about the ultimate mystery I had been so glibly naming as God.”

“They led me into spiritual direction, and later to my first experiences of contemplative stillness and retreat.”

Today he takes the following position:

“In that regard, church isn’t what is important. It is the world, and our life within it. When religion and personal spirituality fail to support our commitments to life within the world they are, I believe, part of the problem, not part of the solution. At this stage of my journey I want more than ever before to be part of the solution – or, in the language of Christian spirituality, to

be aligned with what God is doing in the world to make all things new in Christ.”

This way of understanding a spiritual journey reminds me of the description, attributed to the Swiss Nikolaus von Flue (1417 - 1487), of three conversions. These three are a) the conversion to Jesus Christ, b) the conversion to the congregation, church or Body of Christ, as one is also accustomed to saying, and finally c) the conversion to the world. The latter means, above all, taking a responsible view of Creation and being in solidarity with all people, whether Christians or non-Christians, as creatures of God and as potential redeemed persons.

To prevent the very moving third conversion pushing the other two conversions into the background, I repeatedly discover that it is essential to have a second conversion that can bear substantial loads. For me, it was important to understand this 2nd conversion under three aspects and to learn to live it out.

First of all, what we usually understand under this term: firm ties to a local congregation and its superordinate network, the denomination. Then also: Where two or three are gathered together, Jesus Christ is there amongst them; there, too, we are church. And church goes even beyond that and counts all Christians as part of the Body of Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the head. We thus have ties to the Christians of the whole world.

These lesser and these comprehensive ties belong to our life, because being human means not only individuality, but always being linked also to others.

I have profited richly from all the contributions by David G. Benner to this e-journal, regardless of the phase of his life from which they originate.

I thank David for making his writings available to us, and from them I have selected some I already knew which appeared particularly relevant to Christian psychology.

- “Christian Counseling and Psychotherapy” from “Psychology and Religion” (1987), edited by David G. Benner, was my first encounter with his work, in the 1980s. It was a great encouragement to us to discover that the term “Christian Psychology”, new to us, appeared in this volume as well. David’s article finished with an invitation to a journey: “If Christian therapy is not simply the application of some biblical theory of personality and therapy, what then is it? This chapter has suggested that it is an approach to therapy offered by a Christian who bases his or her understanding of persons on the Bible and allows this understanding to shape all aspects of theory and practice. This suggests an ongoing process rather than a finished product. Seen thus, the Christian therapist is not one who practices a certain type of therapy but one who views himself in God’s service in and through his profession and who sees his primary allegiance and accountability to his God, and only secondarily to his profession or discipline.”
- “The Incarnation as a Metaphor for Psychotherapy” from “Journal of Psychology and Theology” 11, 1983 For its time, I consider this article to have been a very courageous step by David G. Benner. The fundamental idea, that of sharing the burden of the clients suffering in analogy to Jesus, is still important today and requires further discussion. “However, it is possible for the therapist to receive renewed strength. In personal relationship to Christ, believers find and renew their strength. Today Christ is incarnate in the Church, his new body. Ultimately, therefore, it is only in the context of the Church that the Christian therapist finds the strength necessary for “incarnational therapy”.
- “Pastoral Conversation” in *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*, 1998, pp. 143-148. *Care of Souls* was translated into German only a few years ago. The

publisher allowed us a generous quotation as part of a review. Wolfram Soldan (Germany) agrees with David G. Benner that a psychologically well-founded psychotherapeutic dialogue, as a genuine engagement between two persons, cannot take place in a value-free space, with a high degree of sensibility for the overstepping of boundaries being called for.

- “Understanding our Humanity”: in *Soulful Spirituality*, 2011 pp 27-37”. David G. Benner’s more recent books concentrate increasingly on spiritual psychology, a psychology that can be categorised, according to *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views* by Eric Johnson, 2010, as a Transformational Psychology. David’s current concern emerges clearly from this statement: “Christian teaching has not always been nearly as clear as to just how important becoming human truly is. Sometimes it has seemed to support a spirituality of escape from the human condition, particularly from our bodies, emotions and sexuality. In this, it has failed to take seriously the Bible’s clear and strong affirmations of goodness of the material world in general and humanity in particular. Salvation as escape from humanity is sub-Christian. Saint Irenaeus got it right when he declared that the glory of God is humans fully alive!” Mike Sheldon (GB), who wrote an accompanying commentary to “Understanding our Humanity”, concludes with these words: “We must be fully awake, live life each moment, seek for experiences, engage in relationships, and strive to more fully enter into the presence of God.”

## “Christian Counseling and Psychotherapy” from “Psychology and Religion” (1987)

In: David G. Benner (Ed.): *Psychology and Religion*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988, 264 – 275. Thank you to the Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group for the permission, copyright date November 12, 2014

One of the more visible products of attempts to integrate psychology and Christian theology has been the development of a number of systems of counseling and psychotherapy qualifying themselves with the adjective Christian. While many have viewed these developments with enthusiasm, some have argued that it is ridiculous to describe psychotherapy as Christian. To do so, they feel, suggests that there is a unique procedure that a Christian should employ for every action. If it is appropriate to talk about Christian psychotherapy, then why not Christian plumbing or Christian penmanship? However, the focus of psychotherapy is obviously much closer to that of Christianity than is the case in activities such as plumbing or penmanship. Also, the value-laden nature of the therapy process necessarily makes it either more or less Christian.

A more serious criticism is raised by Bobgan and Bobgan (1979), who view psychotherapy and Christianity as fundamentally incompatible. Contrasting the psychological way to health with the spiritual way, these authors assert that psychotherapy is not a neutral set of scientific techniques but rather a religious system, and a false one at that. The attempt to „Christianize“ psychotherapy is therefore seen as a further erosion of the spiritual ministry of the church.

While agreeing that psychotherapy cannot be seen as a value-free set of techniques, a good many Christian mental health professionals and lay persons have seen that this is precisely why it is imperative that Christians subject their theories and practice of therapy to rigorous biblical evaluation. Others have gone further than

this, arguing that since existing secular theories of therapy are built upon non-Christian presuppositions, a truly Christian approach must begin (and in some cases end) with the biblical view of persons. Concepts and techniques are then drawn from secular systems if they are found to be compatible with the new foundation.

### Current Approaches

One factor that makes it difficult to overview and classify current Christian approaches to therapy is the often unclear line of differentiation between pastoral counseling and other forms of Christian therapy. Hiltner and Colton (1961) demonstrated that the context of pastoral counseling (usually a church) and the symbols and expectations attached to the role of the clergy all serve to make it somewhat different from therapy offered outside an explicitly pastoral context. However, as pastoral counselors have sometimes moved physically out of the church to secular centers of pastoral psychotherapy, and as some psychotherapists have made a more explicit and visible identification with Christianity and its values, the differences are often less apparent. Since pastoral counseling is dealt with in a separate article, the primary focus here will be nonpastoral therapy.

In a recent summary of the major current approaches to Christian therapy Collins (1980) identifies 17 systems, including 4 that are explicitly pastoral, which he suggests to be distinctively Christian. While these vary tremendously in their sophistication, for the most part they are quite simplistic and fall far short of being a comprehensive system or model of therapy.

Ford and Urban (1963) suggest that a system of therapy needs to include a theory of personality development, a theory of psychopathology, a statement of the goals of therapy, and the conditions and techniques for producing behavior change. These ideals of a comprehensive system are met imperfectly by most, if not all, models of psychotherapy. For example, Gestalt therapy and reality therapy are usually seen to be deficient in terms of their assumptions about both normal and abnormal personality development. Existential therapy has most commonly been judged to be weak in terms of its therapeutic techniques.



1990's: „Christ in Gethsemane“

The current approaches to Christian counseling are no more adequate in terms of these criteria. In fact, in the majority of cases they are much less comprehensive. For example, relationship counseling (Carlson, 1980) includes assumptions only about the conditions for change, ignoring personality development, psychotherapy, and goals of therapy. Similarly growth counseling (Clinebell, 1979), love therapy (Morris, 1974), and integrity therapy (Drakeford, 1967) all give only very minimal treatment to the processes of normal or abnormal personality development, focusing on goals and techniques of therapy. Only biblical counseling as developed by Crabb (1977) explicitly sets forth a model of personality development and psychopathology and then relates goals and techniques of therapy to this foundation. In this regard it stands as probably the most comprehensive of the existing Christian approaches. However, in comparison to psychoanalysis, client-centered (person-centered) therapy, or behavior therapy, it still must be seen as simplistic and far from a comprehensive model.

To be fair, however, it is important to realize that it was probably not the intention of these authors to present their ideas as a comprehensive system of counseling but rather as an approach to counseling. For example, Carlson (1980) states that his intent is to present a style of counseling that is based on Jesus' style of relating. He goes on to assert that „there is no recognized set of techniques that are exclusively Christian” (p. 32) and that there is „no agreed-upon focus of change” (p. 33). His focus, therefore, is on a style of relating, which he feels is the point where a counselor or therapist is most able to be explicitly Christian.

There is one additional point that should be noted in evaluating existing Christian approaches to counseling. With the exception of biblical counseling and nouthetic counseling none of the other approaches have been explicitly developed from Christian theology. Rather, they are adapted forms of existing secular theories which the authors argue are consistent with Christian truth. Thus, we find transactional analysis (Malony, 1980), reality therapy (Morris, 1974), and family systems therapy (Larsen, 1980) at the basis of approaches to therapy which are argued

by respective advocates as being basically compatible with biblical theology.

This leads to the question of how these approaches differ from others that are not called Christian. Is Christian psychotherapy anything more than a Christian doing psychotherapy? Vanderploeg (1981) argues that „there is no difference between Christian and non-Christian therapy. The goals are the same, ... the means are the same. ... The difference lies not within therapy but within the therapists themselves. One group is Christian and the other is not” (p. 303). Those who have disagreed with this position and have argued for an approach to psychotherapy that is uniquely Christian have usually done so on the basis of either uniqueness in theory or uniqueness in role and/or task. These two major arguments will be considered separately.

### **The Bible and Personality Theory**

For a number of authors the answer to the question of what makes a particular approach to counseling Christian has been quite simple and direct. They assert that Christian counseling is based on the biblical model of personality. In other words, they assume that Scripture contains a unique anthropology and theory of psychotherapy. Adams (1977) argues that the Bible is the only textbook needed for the Christian to learn all that is needed for counseling. He asserts that „if a principle is new to or different from those that are advocated in Scriptures, it is wrong; if it is not, it is unnecessary” (p. 183). Others (Carter, 1980; Crabb, 1977) have avoided the assumption that nothing useful can be learned about counseling apart from the Scriptures but have retained the expectation that Scripture does contain a unique personality theory and implicit model of counseling. The striking thing, however, is that seldom do these people agree as to just what Scripture suggests to be this unique model. This is reminiscent of Berkouwer's (1962) assertion that the failures to find a system of personality or psychology in Scripture “have only made clear that because of the great variety of concepts used in the Bible, it is not possible to synthesize them into a systematic Biblical anthropology in which the structure and composition of man would be made clear. ... It is obviously not the intention of

the divine revelation to give us exact information about man in himself and thus to anticipate what later scientific research on man offers" (p. 199).

Although the Scriptures should not, therefore, be expected to provide a comprehensive theory of personality or psychotherapy, they obviously do contain a view of persons that is most essential to the individual wishing to provide Christian therapy. In fact, whatever else Christian counseling is, surely it must be based on and informed by these biblical perspectives on human nature. Three biblical themes seem particularly relevant: the unity of personality, creation in the image of God, and the reality of sin.

### **Psychospiritual unity**

Historically, attempts to understand what Scripture teaches about human personality have often begun with a discussion of the so-called parts of persons (heart, soul, mind, etc.). In fact, one longstanding debate in biblical anthropology has been over whether man is best seen as a dichotomy (body-soul) or trichotomy (body-soul-spirit). Significantly, this debate is now receding into history, as the consensus of many theologians has increasingly been that the primary biblical emphasis is on the unity of personality. The suggestion is that while Scripture does present a number of characteristics of persons, these were never intended to be interpreted as components or parts. Always they are to be seen as perspectives on the whole.

The implication of this is that man does not have a spirit, man is spirit. Similarly, man does not have a soul or a body, but is soul and is body. Further, this means that since we do not have spiritual or psychological parts to our personality, neither do we have problems that are purely spiritual or purely psychological. All problems occur within the common substrate of psychospiritual processes and affect the totality of a person's functioning. The Christian therapist must therefore resist the temptation to artificially separate problems and people into psychological and spiritual parts. Similarly, the Christian therapist cannot ignore a problem just because it has a superficial religious or spiritual appearance.

### **Created in God's image**

The second aspect of the biblical view of persons that needs to be considered is the concept of the *imago Dei*. Although Scripture directly discusses the fact of our creation in God's image in only a few passages, theologians have usually given it a central place in their doctrine of man. Vanderploeg (1981) has similarly argued that it must be seen to be foundational to any understanding of psychotherapy. The fact that we were created in God's image establishes human beings as essentially relational, called to relationship with God and with each other. Viewing the major goal of psychotherapy as helping individuals deal with and enhance their relationships, Vanderploeg then argues that this represents helping people expand and explore the *imago Dei* within them.

The doctrine of the *imago Dei* also helps us understand man's religious nature. Hart (1977) has argued that because we were created in the image of God, our whole life is intended to mirror God. We were created to serve God and to lose ourselves in joyous fellowship with him. By his gift of free will he allows us to choose whether we will, in fact, serve him or not. However, we will serve someone or something, and that is the heart of our religiosity. Religion therefore defines mankind. It is not something added on to an otherwise complete being. It describes our essential meaning, our need to be self-transcendent and to lose ourselves in service to God and others.

### **The reality of sin**

While the fact of our creation in God's image validates the good and noble aspects of human functioning, the Christian view of persons must be balanced by the reality of sin. More than just a tendency to fail to meet our personal expectations or those held of us by others, sin has traditionally been viewed by Christian theology as active rebellion against God and his holy law. This rebellion results in alienation from God, self, and others. These consequences of sin are therefore ultimately, although not necessarily personally or directly, at the root of all our problems.

This reality informs a Christian approach to counseling. If sin is real, then guilt may not al-

ways be neurotic. Sometimes it will be real, and forgiveness and repentance will then be necessary. Pattison (1969) states that "the task of the psychotherapist, then, is not to assuage guilt feelings, although that is often a necessary preamble to successful therapy. Rather, the therapist seeks to help the patient see himself and his relationships with others in the light of how the patient violates the relationships to which he is committed. . . . Patients would quite willingly settle for pacification of their superego, but they are reluctant to undergo the pain of changing their pattern of relationships so that they no longer need to feel guilty" (pp. 106-107).

When combined with other equally important biblical themes such as grace, the incarnation, and life after death, the concepts discussed above should be at the foundation of any theory of personality that calls itself Christian. However, they are far from adequate as a complete personality theory. While we therefore may conclude that the Scriptures should not be expected to yield a comprehensive system of therapy, it is clear that they contain perspectives on persons that ought to be foundational for Christian therapy.

### **Roles and Tasks**

The second possible basis for the uniqueness of Christian therapy is the role and tasks of the Christian therapist. In his sociological analysis of psychiatry and religion, Klausner (1964) suggests four different ideological positions based on the differentiation of the task and role in counseling or psychotherapy: reductionist, dualist, alternativist, and specialist. Reductionists maintain that there is only one role and one task. This is because there is only one type of personal problem and only one type of person equipped to address it. Material reductionists view this problem in scientific, psychological terms and see the person trained in this system as the only one equipped to handle such problems. Spiritual reductionists view the problem in spiritual or religious terms and see the minister as the only one equipped to handle such problems.

Dualists believe that there are both psychological and spiritual problems. However, they also believe that one qualified person can address

both these types of problems. Alternativists are opposite to the dualists, claiming only one basic type of problem but allowing for the two separate roles in the treatment of this problem. Mental health professionals and clergy are viewed as equally valid, functionally equivalent alternative roles, both groups being appropriately involved in the treatment of the one basic problem experienced by people. Finally, specialists argue that there are two discrete tasks and therefore there must be two roles. Ministers and therapists are, respectively, spiritual specialists and psychological specialists, each dealing with one of the two basic types of problems.

All four of these positions are represented in the contemporary Christian counseling literature. The spiritual reductionist position is probably best represented by Adams (1977) and Bobgan and Bobgan (1979). These authors argue that nonorganic psychological problems are really mislabeled spiritual problems. The one person equipped to provide help for such problems is the Christian who draws his mandate, goals, and techniques from the Bible and from this source alone. While this position has been well received by many conservative Protestant pastors, most Christian mental health professionals have viewed it as providing an inadequate account of psychological functioning and a limited understanding of the role of the therapist. This assumption of one basic type of problem is shared by the alternativists. Benner (1979) represents this position, arguing that all emotional or psychological problems are at core both spiritual and psychological. Because of the fundamental unity of personality, depression is as much an issue of spiritual significance as guilt is a matter of psychological significance. The challenge is for the Christian therapist to view people as spiritual beings regardless of their religiosity and to be sensitive to spiritual dimensions of their functioning. The challenge to the minister is to similarly view a person as a psychospiritual unity and to resist the tendency to either reduce psychological problems to spiritual problems or to ignore psychological problems since these are beyond their competence. This is not to suggest that all ministers or psychotherapists will be adequately equipped to handle the broad range of problems encounte-

red in pastoral counseling and in psychotherapy, but rather to encourage both groups to view problems within the matrix of psychospiritual unity and to respond accordingly.

The alternativist position is attractive to many because it seems to combine something of the simplicity of the reductionist model with a more adequate understanding of psychological processes. Its major weakness lies in its difficulty in explaining what often appear to be differing levels of psychological and spiritual health within a person. If psychospiritual processes are as unified as argued, the parallels in psychological and spiritual functioning should be even more pronounced than those often seen.

The dualist position is perhaps the most popular in contemporary Christian therapy. Tournier (1963) has been a very influential representative of this position. Minirth (1977) is perhaps an even better representative, arguing that Christian therapy must be responsive to the unique problems of body, soul, and spirit. The first step is therefore the differential diagnosis of the problems of each sphere. Each type of problem is then treated by appropriate and unique methods. Advocates of this position view it as a psychology of the whole person in that the therapist is prepared to respond to both spiritual and psychological problems. Critics view it as more a total treatment approach than a whole-person approach in that the person is not viewed as a whole but rather as the sum of a number of different parts.

A related criticism questions the possibility of differential diagnosis and treatment of spiritual and psychological problems. When is depression a psychological problem and when is it a spiritual problem? Perhaps more difficult to resolve are the technical questions associated with the different tasks required for work with explicitly religious issues versus nonreligious issues. For example, Pattison (1966) asks when the therapist should treat religious questions as grist for the therapeutic mill and when he or she should enter into either a Socratic dialogue or perhaps an explicit instructional role. Also, what are the effects of such movement between roles on transference and countertransference? These questions do not as yet seem adequately answered.

The specialist model has been argued by Pattison (1966), who suggests that different roles are appropriate for the unique tasks of the therapist and minister. The role of the minister, who works as a definer of social and moral values and behavior, is best served by a close social-emotional relationship with the parishioner. In contrast, the task of changing personality argues for the therapist to remove himself from a direct involvement in the patient's social value system and maintain more personal and emotional distance.

The problem with this position is that the distinction which it makes between the goals of therapists and ministers may be exaggerated. Perhaps personality change and changes in social values and behavior are not as discrete as presented. However, if the goals are as presented, Pattison's conclusion as to the role that best supports each set of goals appears helpful.

#### Goals

What goals should then guide Christian therapy? Ward (1977) suggests that the ultimate goal of Christian therapy must always be to assist the client in becoming more like Jesus Christ. Arbuckle (1975) claims that the desire of the Christian to convert and to change others to his own personal faith appears to be contradictory to general counseling philosophy, which values client self-determination. But are these incompatible? First, we must realize that therapy is never value free and that all therapists either implicitly or explicitly communicate their values and personal religion. Therefore, the question is not whether the therapist has certain personal values or goals but how these influence the therapy process. A therapist who uses the therapy relationship to force his or her beliefs on another person is obviously behaving in an unprofessional manner. Christ clearly had the goal of bringing people into relationship with the Father, but his relating to individuals was never characterized by coercion. He clearly was willing to allow people their right of self-determination.

This suggests that while the Christian therapist will have the ultimate spiritual welfare and growth of the client as a part of his concern and goals, he will be willing to work with less ultimate concerns if this is most therapeutically

appropriate. Again, Christ's own behavior illustrates this. His frequent healings of individuals apart from an explicit verbal proclamation of the gospel show his concern to meet people at their point of need. His ministry was not always in ultimate dimensions, even though he never lost sight of those ultimate concerns.

Ellens (1980) points out how easy it is for Christian therapists to substitute private philosophy for demandingly sound psychotherapeutic practice. He states that „the practice of the helping professions which is preoccupied with the final step of wholeness, spiritual maturity, will usually short circuit the therapeutic process and play the religious dynamic of the patient or the rapist straight into the typical religious patient's psychopathology” (p. 4).

The goals of the Christian therapist will also be guided by the picture of the whole mature person that is presented as the goal of Christian growth in Scripture. Thus, for example, the Christian therapist would seek to encourage the development of interdependence, this in contrast to the autonomy and independence valued in many therapeutic approaches. Other aspects of Christian maturity are also readily translatable into therapeutic goals for the Christian counselor. The Christian therapist will be likely, therefore, to share many of the goals of his secular counterpart. However, the goals that direct Christian therapy should grow out of the overall Christian view of persons discussed earlier.

### **Techniques**

Is Christian therapy unique by virtue of employment of certain techniques? Are there uniquely Christian or non-Christian techniques? Adams (1977) answers these questions affirmatively and, assuming techniques to be dependent on their presuppositional base, has judged the techniques of secular therapies to be inappropriate for the Christian therapist. The relationship between most techniques and the theory with which they are primarily associated seems, however, to be very loose indeed. One has only to note the very diverse theoretical orientations laying claim to the same techniques to see this point.

Most techniques seem to be neither Christian nor non-Christian. Therefore, they should be

judged not on the basis of who first described them but rather their function. Do they support the therapeutic goals? Also, they should be evaluated for their consistency with the overall theoretical framework guiding the therapy. The Christian therapist will thus be cautious of pragmatic eclecticism as the sole guide to which techniques to employ.

Some Christian therapists do employ explicitly religious resources such as prayer, Scripture reading, or even laying on of hands. While any of these interventions may well be appropriate under some circumstances, the responsible therapist would want to understand clearly the significance of using them for the client and the therapy process.

### **Summary**

Christian therapy is clearly not a monolithic development. Little consensus exists on such basic questions as the role and task of the therapist and even the question of whether Scripture should be expected to yield a definitive model for Christian counseling. A recent survey of the membership of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (Cole & DeVries, 1981) indicated that 48% of the Christian mental health professionals responding do not expect Scripture to yield a unified biblical model of counseling. The same percentage do expect such a development. Also, 87% see an eclectic approach as most faithful to Scripture, which they see as consistent with a great diversity of styles of counseling.

If Christian therapy is not simply the application of some biblical theory of personality and therapy, what then is it? This chapter has suggested that it is an approach to therapy offered by a Christian who bases his or her understanding of persons on the Bible and allows this understanding to shape all aspects of theory and practice. This suggests an ongoing process rather than a finished product. Seen thus, the Christian therapist is not one who practices a certain type of therapy but one who views himself in God's service in and through his profession and who sees his primary allegiance and accountability to his God, and only secondarily to his profession or discipline.

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## “The Incarnation as a Metaphor for Psychotherapy” in “Journal of Psychology and Theology” 11, 1983<sup>1</sup>

The incarnation of Christ is considered as a metaphor for the role of the psychotherapist. The tendency of children to attempt to purge parental badness by taking it upon themselves, as noted by object relations theorists, is considered as a reflection of the imago Dei. Ways in which a similar process may occur in psychotherapy are then considered. It is concluded that the incarnational element of psychotherapy may be one of the basic curative factors present in any successful therapy.

The question of how therapy works has largely been obscured by the more primary questions of whether it works. As more and more consensus develops that at least under some circumstances psychotherapy can produce significant changes. Garfield (1983) has argued that it is now time to turn our attention to the question of how these changes occur. Yalom's (1970) list of the curative factors operative in group psychotherapy seems to have been well received by practitioners of many different styles of group therapy. No such list, however, exists for individual therapy. In fact it appears that although we have an abundance of theories of psychotherapy, we seem to possess very little understanding of the way in which talking with someone about personal problems produces change.

### **The Search for Curative Factors**

One reason for the uncertainty as to how therapy works relates to the difference between what therapists say they do in therapy and what they actually do. It has become clear that labels of theoretical orientation do very little to describe actual therapeutic operations. Thus, one might describe himself or herself as analyzing and working through a transference reaction, getting the patient in touch with his or her body,

or restructuring dysfunctional cognitions. However, these theory-laden descriptions tell us much more about the therapists' conceptualizations than about their interventions. When the actual interventions are observed from a more theoretically neutral vantage point, they often turn out to be very similar to those used by therapists working with supposedly very different treatment approaches. These similarities in actual therapist behavior increase as therapy effectiveness increases, with the most effective therapists showing more similarities among themselves than differences (Bergin & Lambert, 1978).

Another reason for our limited understanding of how therapy works is that attempts to identify and label the curative factors have usually been within the framework of one of the competing theoretical models. Thus, psychoanalysts have tended to rely on the concept of insight, behaviorists on the concept of learning, and cognitive therapists on the concept of cognitive restructuring as they attempt to explain therapeutic gains. The general difficulty in demonstrating differential effectiveness of one type of therapy over another has, however, been discouraging for those arguing for such concepts. One would expect that if one of these were the major curative factor in psychotherapy, then a treatment approach based specifically on this factor should maximize its role in treatment and, therefore, be demonstrably superior in effectiveness. However, in general, this has not proven to be the case. Rather, we find most therapies studied to be approximately equal in effectiveness, the exceptions being rare and with specific disorders.

This difficulty in demonstrating differential effectiveness of various types of therapy has, however, also made a positive contribution to the search for the illusive curative factors. Frank (1961) is one who has called our attention to the on-specific factors in therapy such as faith, hope, and other expectation variables. Such factors, sometimes referred to as placebo factors, are general to all therapies and may therefore be the common active ingredient. Frank's demonstration of the role of such factors in both

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<sup>1</sup> Thank you for the copy rights to Rosemead School of Psychology, Biola University



Crucifixion with Full Barns

formal and informal helping relationships in Western and non-Western societies make his argument powerful.

Rogers' (1957) position is in some ways quite similar. Identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic effectiveness as empathy, respect, and congruence, Rogers argued that other ingredients contribute to effectiveness only in as much as they communicate these essential relationship factors. Qualities of the therapist's personality and style of relating thus become primary and techniques secondary.

While research has not been consistently supportive of Rogers' assumption of the necessary and sufficient conditions of therapy, it would appear that there is still considerable promise in expecting that the active curative factors in therapy may not be as closely related to the skillful application of one or another technique as we might want to think. When I have asked parents at the end of a successful course of therapy to reflect back on the things that were helpful, I have yet to have someone tell me that the big breakthrough came the day we penetrated to the core of the repressed Oedipal conflict, completed the aversive conditioning, or identified the faulty cognitions behind their self-defeating behavior. Usually they have had trouble precisely identifying any one specific factor. However, when they have, they have frequently pointed to some process occurring between the two of us rather than to something I did to them. They then talk about feeling loved or accepted by me, or describe themselves as experiencing healing or growth through the manner in which we related to each other.

Considering love as the essential dynamic in the therapeutic process is not new. From the early psychoanalyst Ferenczi (1952) to the more recent work of Erich Fromm (1956) love has often been suggested as the major curative ingredient in therapy. From a Christian perspective, Calabrese and Proctor (1977) have described the intensive therapy experience as healing through love. But what is love and how does it heal? Rogers' answer has been translated into more theological language by Oden (1966) who sees therapy as the mediation of divine grace through

the therapist's unconditional acceptance of the patient. Oden also suggests that the therapy relationship reflects something of God's relationship to us. It seems relevant therefore to examine God's way of relating to us in our problems and determine whether this can assist us in understanding psychotherapeutic healing.

### **God's Solution to Humanity's Problem**

Orthodox Christian theology has always affirmed that sin is ultimately behind all of humanity's problems. However, to reduce this to specific personal sin lying behind any particular problem is to misunderstand this doctrine. It is also to fail to accept Jesus' explicit teaching that some problems are not the result of personal sin but rather are allowed by God for his glory (John 9:1-3). However, in an ultimate sense, sin in the world and in the lives and relationships of individuals results in all the manifestations of brokenness and pain which all experience.

As a God of love and mercy, He chose to act to remedy humanity's sin problem. He could have destroyed his creation and started again, perhaps taking some precautions to insure against another fall. Or perhaps his solution could have been purely judicial, clinical, or in some other way impersonal and safe. But God's solution to the problem of human nature was none of these. It was an intimately personal and immensely costly process. God's solution was the incarnation (John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-8. Hebrews 9:11-14)—Christ's coming „in the flesh“ so that He could die in our place. He became a person, making himself like us so that he could substitute for us by carrying our suffering in himself. He did not solve our sin problem at arm's length but took us into himself and purged our sin from us. Our sin, taken upon him, was overcome by his grace. Where sin did abound, there grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20).

But there is another equally important aspect of the incarnation: God became human but did not cease to be God. In the incarnation he came close enough to identify with humanity and allow humanity to identify with him. However, he never lost his separate identity. Nor does humanity. Rather, in new relationship to him, per-

sons find their identity and their unique selves. Paul teaches that Christians are crucified with Christ but that paradoxically they continue to live, only now it is his power and presence living in and through them (Galatians 2:20). Individuals do not merge with God in a fusion experience where they become him and he becomes them. Rather both retain separate identities. In a partial and imperfect way this truth is also reflected in the biblical image of the shepherd and his sheep, an image frequently used to picture God's relationship to Christians. The shepherd is with the sheep but is not a sheep. Even though the shepherd suffers the long cold nights on the hillside with the sheep, suffering not only with them but for them, the shepherd remains separate.

The gospel is, in essence, the good news that God came to provide for healing by taking humanity's suffering upon himself. But what has this to do with psychotherapy? How far can we take such divine activity as a model for the human helping relationship? Before considering this question more directly, it seems important to first consider some basic aspects of human nature which may more clearly reveal God as a model, and humankind as the image of God.

### **The Imago Dei and Object Relations**

What does it mean to speak of humans as created in the image of God? Traditionally the answer to this question has been to identify attributes of human personality such as reason, morality, volition, and creativity which are said to correspond to attributes of God. This is undoubtedly a helpful beginning, but Barth (1962), Brunner (1947) and others have suggested that such a list misses a much more basic attribute which we share with God, namely, our social nature. So humanity, reflecting this quality of God, is also intrinsically relational or social.

The need for relationship is fundamental to human nature, perhaps the most fundamental need. People are created for intimate communion with God as well as others; apart from both relationships, they remain incomplete. Berkhouwer (1962) states that to look at people apart from their intended relationship to God is to fail to understand them. This is an inherent

limitation of any psychology which refuses to admit spiritual realities within its field of vision. Humanity's basic relational need, not just for God but also for others, has often been overlooked or de-emphasized in psychology. Freud pointed us in the wrong direction by identifying gratification of biological drives as the most basic need. Although contemporary behavioral theorists are not likely to talk about basic needs, implicit in operant learning theory seems to be an assumption not too dissimilar from Freud's pleasure principle. It appears that people avoid pain and seek out pleasure, and this simple awareness provides basic guidance in the behavior therapist's selection of reinforcers to change behavior.

Interpersonal psychologists, following in the tradition of Harry Stack Sullivan (1953), have been much more aware of the basic relational needs. They have made the examination of a person's relationships the primary source of data for diagnosis or personality assessment. They have done much to make clear that individuals are their relationships and that their need for relationships is basic. However, the tradition which has given us the clearest understanding of the dynamics of this relational need within personality may be object relations theory, a recent hybrid of psychoanalysis.

Object relations theory has given particular emphasis to early relationships between infant and parents or caretakers. The use of the term "object" reflects the mechanistic influence of classical psychoanalysis as well as the earlier tendency to view people's struggles from the outside rather than empathically. It is used to refer to both animate and inanimate objects since the infant relates to both in similar ways, that is, by developing internal representations of them. American object relations theorists (such as Kernberg, 1980) have developed this approach within what remains a basically classical psychoanalytic framework. British theorists, most particularly Fairbairn (1954), have been more radical abandoning much of Freud's metapsychology and replacing it with an equally complex structural developmental theory. It is in the work of Fairbairn that we find the most complete understanding of humanity's intrinsic

relational nature.

For Fairbairn (1954), people do not seek discharge of biological drives, but rather they seek relationships. This object-seeking quality of humans describes their most basic drive. Pleasurable tension discharge is an accompaniment of relationships. Similarly, aggression is not a basic drive but rather a reaction to frustration in object-relationships. However, people do not just seek relationships, they seek good relationships. Fairbairn describes individuals as longing for a perfect father and perfect mother. The Christian understands this longing as reflective of our intended relationship to God. All long for a perfect father-mother and yet all experience imperfect, limited parents. The frustration produced by encountering good parents who also have bad or frustrating qualities sets in motion a complex intrapsychic process wherein people try to make relationships that more closely approximate the ideal for which they long.

To describe in detail the process by which this occurs would lead too far from the present focus (see Fairbairn. 1954). The major step in the process is hypothesized to be the development of internal object representations of external objects, particularly of bad or frustrating objects. Fairbairn explains the child's paradoxical action of internalizing, rather than rejecting, the frustrating object by suggesting that the child cannot afford to reject the parent who is still needed: Better a bad parent than no parent at all. Furthermore, Fairbairn suggests that the internalization of the object is both an attempt to control the parent and an attempt to purge the parent's badness through taking this badness into oneself. The child, according to Fairbairn (1954), would „rather be bad himself than have bad objects.... One of his motives in becoming bad is to make his objects good“ (p. 65).

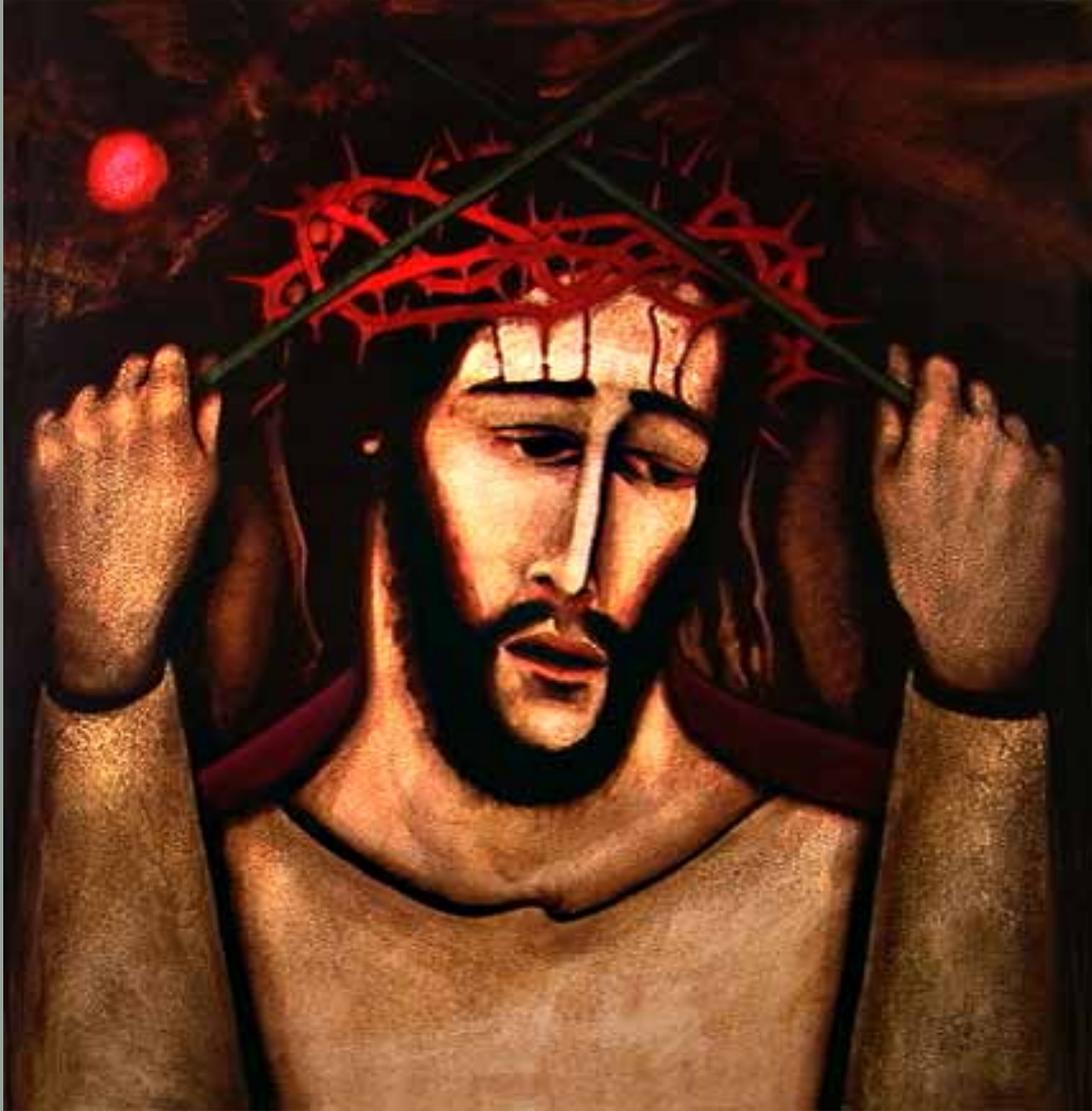
This purgative process is only one possible response to predominately frustrating parents. It is, however, a major way in which the infant attempts to cope with less than perfect objects in the search for the good and ideal object.

Stepping back from this highly speculative metapsychology, it is necessary to determine if it corresponds to anything observable. One frequently made observation which is made in-

telligible by object relations theory is the fact that children do not simply or even primarily feel angry when their parents fail them in serious ways. Instead they feel shame. The child who was placed for adoption by a young single mother who was unable to meet the parenting responsibilities will, in later life, probably feel deep shame associated with thoughts such as “I must have been an awful child for my mother to have to give me up.\* Rather than feel anger and experience the pain of imperfect parents, the child through identification purges the parent of badness, takes this upon self and feels shame and lessened self-worth. It is also interesting to note how the parent is viewed: Typically the parent is idealized and seen as the longed-for perfect parent. This is also seen in children who are removed from a child-abusing home. Once again the badness of the parent is internalized anti the parent, now purged of this, is idealized. The pattern frequently involves the child wanting to return to the home, denying the problems. They are registered, however, on the intrapsychic structure of the child where the internalized and split object representations devalue self-worth and produce shame.

It appears that woven deep within the basic fabric of personality may be a tendency to take the badness of significant others upon oneself in order to purge them of their evil. Perhaps this is part of the image of God—part of the way in which humans, like him, tend to relate to others. Obviously the internalization of someone else's badness does not produce any objective purging or atonement for them. It is here that the divine incarnation breaks down as an analogy for any human activity. There is nothing that individuals can do to atone for their own sins or for those of anyone else. However, perhaps this tendency to attempt to purge others of their evil reflects something of the *imago Dei*.

For the child, Fairbairn (1954) suggests that this tendency reveals the longing for a perfect parent. In the mature adult where needs are reasonably well met in relationships, might it represent a more altruistic desire to help the other? This question becomes significant then in considering the implications of this concept for the therapy process.



Crowning with Thorns

### **Incarnation in Psychotherapy**

Star Trek fans will remember the television episode where Captain Kirk encountered an alien woman, called an Empath, who was able to absorb his physical afflictions and thereby provide him with healing. Furthermore, while her absorption of the sickness caused her real pain, she was eventually able to overcome it, and she avoided the permanent injury which should have been associated with the affliction.

This woman did more than respond with empathy, respect, and congruence; she also did more than accept the suffering individual. She entered into the life and experience of the sufferer, took the suffering upon herself, and then overcame it. The result was the healing of the suffering one. This is the metaphor for psychotherapy which is seen also in the incarnation.

Saretsky (1981) has described the psychotherapist as a container for the sickness of the patient. He views the patient as dumping all his toxic internal garbage into the therapist. The therapist absorbs these toxic materials but is not destroyed by them: Some are absorbed, and others are temporarily contained, eventually detoxified, then being available for reabsorption by the patient.

In more concrete terms this is seen when the therapist accepts the projections and transferences of the patient and bears them patiently. Sometimes the anger received in such encounters causes pain. However, out of a position of strength, the pain is absorbed without retaliation or defensiveness and eventually the patient stops projecting and can begin to own the projected material. At other times what the therapist accepts is more benign. However, through empathic involvement the therapist enters into the suffering, miserable, confused world of the patient and offers strength. The suffering and confusion is absorbed by the therapist for the ultimate healing of the patient.

Kenneth Leech, in his book *Soul Friend* (1977), describes the role of the spiritual director or guide (a "soul friend" in similar terms. Although Leech recognizes differences between one giving spiritual direction and the psychotherapist, he sees important similarities. In discussing the origins of the contemporary concept of spiritual

guide he identifies the Russian *startsy* as one of the earliest role models. The *startsy* were qualified for service as spiritual guides by virtue of three qualities: Insight, love, and the capacity to make the sufferings of others their own. Dostoyevsky, who frequently visited the famous *startsy* Amvrosy (1812-1891), described the spiritual director in *The Brothers Karamazov* as one who takes „your soul and your will into his soul and his will“ (Leech, 1977. p. 49). Leech suggests that such vicarious participation of one in the life of another is the living symbol of the good shepherd, this being the task of the soul friend. Leech also recognizes the importance of the soul friend not allowing too much dependence to develop. This reflects the other side of the incarnation metaphor, the separateness of the helper. Just as God did not stop being God as he came into humanity, so too the therapist does not get lost in incarnation to the patient. The therapist remains the therapist and does not become the patient. Even in the presence of intense involvement and shared experience, there must remain a separateness of identity.

An understanding of the difference between empathy and sympathy illustrates this point. In empathy, one enters into another's experience and shares it without losing sight of the fact that it is truly the other person's experience. If this distinction is lost the autonomy of the other is likewise lost and the resulting relationship is more likely to be characterized by sympathy. Sympathy, thus understood, is seen to be a way of responding to one's own pain by attempting to cover it over with reassurance to the other.

In English translations of Freud, his use of the German word *teilnahmsvoll* has usually been rendered "sympathy." However, a more accurate translation of this frequently used word is „to feel along with“ or „to suffer along with.“ Either of these expressions shows the richer meaning of the original term and reflects the participation in the experience of another which he intended to communicate as an essential quality of the therapist.

How does the therapist's entering into the suffering of the patient in such a way produce change? Answers have been varied and at pre-

sent are incomplete. Loewald (1960) has focused on the therapeutic effect of the patient internalizing the positive interaction of the therapy situation. This is reminiscent of Alexander's (1948) concept of the "corrective emotional experience." Bion (1968) and Winnicott (1965) have both emphasized the integrating function which occurs within the patient when the therapist emotionally and cognitively absorbs the patient's inner chaos. They view this as relieving pressure on and in the patient, thus allowing a new degree of integration of personality.

Saretsky (1981) places more emphasis on the healing of splits in the internal self-representations (corresponding to the different ways of experiencing self). This is made possible by the projections put onto the therapist being gradually re-owned and reabsorbed. Saretsky sees this as the „natural outgrowth of the rich tapestry of healthy interchange“ (p. 93) between the therapist and the patient and not primarily as a result of correct technical interventions.

But perhaps it is more parsimonious to view the curative factor in this basic process as love. Love involves giving of oneself to another, making oneself available to bear someone else's burdens and to share in their struggles. This is not „sloppy sentimentalism“ but rather tough, disciplined, and personally costly love. Its mode of communication is involvement. Its effect is healing.

Such love can be communicated in a great many different ways. This is precisely why it may be seen to be present in each of the approaches to therapy. Well-conducted behavior therapy, gestalt therapy, existential therapy, and psychoanalysis all involve the therapist entering the patient's world and becoming available to the patient. In one way or another all these (and other) modalities then encourage the patient to put inner confusion and chaos onto the therapist who then attempts to render it less chaotic and frightening, more intelligible and benign. This assumption and transformation of the patient's inner world constitutes the incarnational element of psychotherapy.

Perhaps it also represents one of the basic curative factors in psychotherapy. Obviously it is not the only one and taken alone it de-emphasizes the role and responsibility of the patient. It also is not the only way in which the therapist relates to the patient; thus, if this mode could be viewed as corresponding to Christ's priestly role, other aspects of the therapist's modes of relating could be tied correspondingly to Christ's prophetic and pastoral roles (Carlson, 1976). However, behind these various roles lies the relationship of the patient and therapist which is basic to all else that is done. Involvement by the therapist which allows for absorption of suffering and sharing of strength may well be the essence of this relationship.

Obviously it is possible for psychotherapists to avoid this sort of incarnational involvement. Those who fear such engagement often hide behind professionalism and technical rules. Both of these have an important role in disciplining our involvement to ensure that it is not primarily meeting our needs but rather those of our patients. Professionalism also serves to maintain the necessary degree of separateness. However, Rogers (1961) was probably correct when he argued that professionalism in psychotherapy has done more to protect therapists from their fears of involvement than it has done to aid therapeutic practice (p. 52).

### **Implications**

The Apostle Paul calls all Christians to the challenge of bearing each other's burdens. This is what Christ did and continues to do for humankind, and it is this which we do in psychotherapy. But who is capable of bearing not only one's own burdens but also those of others? What enables the therapist to share personal health and absorb the illness and suffering of another without personal hazard? The answer is that therapists must have their own health continuously ensured by ongoing relationships where their needs are met and burdens shared. It is important to emphasize that the sharing of strength and health does deplete the therapist's resources and that they must, therefore, lie continuously renewed. In Luke 8:45-46, Jesus reported an experience quite similar, even if not

identical, to that experienced by the psychotherapist. Jesus was touched by a woman who was suffering from a hemorrhage which had afflicted her for 12 years. As soon as she touched Jesus she was healed, but immediately he perceived strength issuing out of him. It is much the same in therapy. However, it is possible for the therapist to receive renewed strength. In personal relationship to Christ, believers find and renew their strength. Today Christ is incarnate in the Church, his new body. Ultimately, therefore, it is only in the context of the Church that the Christian therapist finds the strength necessary for „incarnational therapy”. Here the Christian therapist receives strength from God who, in the words of Paul, „comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 2:4).

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## Wolfram Soldan (Germany) in Conversation with David G. Benner's Pastoral Conversation

in David G. Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*, 1998, pp. 143-148

“If the challenge of therapeutic conversation is to not allow reductionistic analysis, clinical techniques, or therapeutic roles to impair the genuine and deep encounter of two people, the challenge of pastoral conversation is to find a path between listening to the other and speaking for God that does not confuse dialogue and preaching. Whereas dialogue was earlier described as a posture of “Here is how I see the world: tell me how you see it so that I can see more clearly”, at its worst, pastoral conversation has sometimes been little more than “Here is how God sees the world; what more is there to say?”

This is obviously not a posture of genuine dialogue. Nor is it an accurate picture of typical pastoral conversation. Under the influence of the clinical pastoral education movement, pastoral care, conversation, and counselling have been sensitized to the importance of listening, not simply proclaiming God's word. But in being reminded of the value of listening, pastoral care givers are not simply being offered the latest distillations of therapeutic soul care, they are more properly being called back to the best of their own tradition. Consider, for example, the advice of the seventeenth century French pastor Fénelon, advising others on the provision of spiritual counsel:

“Speak little; listen much; think far more of understanding hearts and of adapting yourself to their needs than of saying clever things to them. Show that you have an open mind, and let everyone see by experience that there is safety and consolation in opening his mind to you.”<sup>1</sup>

1 F. Fénelon, *Spiritual Letters to Women* (New Canaan, CT: Keats, 1980), 24.



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Articles by Wolfram:

<http://emcapp.ignis.de/2/#/76>  
and

<http://emcapp.ignis.de/4/#/6>

Several centuries later, Dietrich Bonhoeffer emphasized the same point, but with even stronger words.

“Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians because Christians are talking when they should be listening. He who no longer listens to his brother will soon no longer be listening to God either . . . One who cannot listen long and patiently will presently be talking beside the point and never really speaking to others, albeit he be not conscious of it.”<sup>2</sup>

*Wolfram Soldan: In the whole of chapter 7, from which this excerpt is taken, the concern is with a posture of dialogue enabling a genuine deep engagement of the two participants. Benner succeeds in bringing out how easily specialist therapists can be caught in a technique-centred trap of making their vis-à-vis into an object for diagnosis and treatment, a danger to which the classical forms of behavioural therapy and psychoanalysis are particularly open. In the more recent, more humanistically influenced forms of therapy, on the other hand, a posture of dialogue is also given a theoretical justification, typically as follows: “You, the client, are the expert on your inner*

2 D. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper, 1959), 97-98.

*life; I am the expert on possible dynamics of change and forms of communication. We have a mutual need of each other as “experts” in order to find a helpful path for you.” In the first excerpt on pastoral conversation (the English word “conversation” has a more dialogue-like sound than the German “Gespräch”), Benner writes about the tension between listening to my vis-à-vis and speaking in God’s name (as in preaching) and emphasises the value of listening. I would like to radicalise this aspect a little further: I believe that preaching, properly understood as communicating the word of God, implies listening and dialogue. But it seems we have lost sight of something: preaching, in both German and English, is derived from “praedicare” (to proclaim publicly), which might suggest monologue. The Greek origin, however, “homileo”, which can have the same meaning, originally meant precisely a dialogue, an intimate coming together: the Word of God, of course, became flesh and lived among us and thus proclaimed Himself, coming down to us and amongst us, on an equal footing with us. How are we to impart knowledge of it/Him without listening – in express contrast, however, to humanistic psychotherapy – a two-fold listening, namely to our human and our heavenly partners in communication? Understood this way, the tension between listening and preaching dissolves; what is left is the tension of how we can get from the success-oriented action mode usual in our culture into a mode of two-fold listening with an ever-increasing depth of attentiveness.*

But while the pastor’s greatest challenge to dialogue may lie in the tension between listening to the person in conversation and talking for God, this proclamatory aspect of pastoral care also is associated with what is probably the greatest contribution that pastoral conversation can make to non-pastoral soul care – the reminder of the importance of moral inquiry in such dialogue. Although pastoral care has at times been unclear about its moral framework, of all the contemporary forms of soul care, it has remained most faithful to the awareness that the care of souls must include a moral perspective. The challenge is to conduct this moral inquiry without resorting to moral manipulation or offering mere moralisms. The best pastoral care does this quite routinely. Others who seek to

rediscover a moral framework for the soul care they offer have much to learn from examining such care.

Morality forms such a deep and foundational part of human personality that it necessarily structures all of life. Life can never be lived in a place that makes moral judgements inappropriate. Many people, however, think of certain aspects of life as belonging to a value-free sphere. As noted earlier, some erroneously argue that psychotherapy operates in such a sphere. Others might argue that the conduct of basic scientific research, or the repair of a radio, or the word-processing of a letter excludes appropriate moral reflection. But, as noted by C. S. Lewis, right and wrong form such a deep and enduring part of how we are programmed to engage with the world that its presence must be interpreted as evidence of the deep structure of reality, or in his words, as a clue to the meaning of the universe.<sup>3</sup>

This makes moral reflection a valuable part of any dialogue. If the goal of dialogue is the deep engagement of two or more people who seek through conversation to work together toward shared and truthful understandings of themselves, each other, and the world, morality has an important place in such conversation. Truth cannot be pursued or apprehended apart from morality. Truth does not exist outside of rightness. This is what Christians understand by the theological assertion that Christ embodies both truth and righteousness.

*Wolfram Soldan: In this intermediate section, Benner shows that a psychologically well-founded dialogue, too, as a genuine encounter between two persons, cannot take place without values as if in a morality-free zone. The frequently postulated value-neutrality of psychotherapy is an illusion, as the more modern humanistically influenced forms of psychotherapy, which would now include the more current trends in behavioural therapy and deep psychology, would recognise: for these, questions of right and wrong as well as spiritual questions are an absolutely fundamental part of being human and should be formed transparently into a dialogue topic in order to strengthen the decision-making ca-*

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1943).



Children Gathering Fruit

*capacity of the client. Under these anthropological preconditions, the demand for value-free procedures can only lead to a concealed and therefore manipulative action of factually present sets of values. Yet there are still many therapists of the old school who consider psychotherapy to be a value-free craft.*

But if moral reflection has an important place in dialogue in general, it has an indispensable place in soul care dialogue. In the earlier discussion of the history of soul care we noted that until the rise of therapeutic psychology, soul care always included a moral dimension. When we examined the history of Christian soul care we again noted that care worthy of being called Christian always operated within a moral context. Not only should Christian soul care be associated with love, forgiveness, and grace, it should also provide an opportunity for exploration of how life should be lived. This is moral inquiry. The presence of a moral component to soul care does not make it the same as moral instruction or moral persuasion. What soul care offers is a context for moral reflection.

Among those who offer soul care, clergy are unique in their social and symbolic role. They are religious authority figures who, like it or not, symbolically represent religious values. The great advantage of this is that people approach clergy knowing that their encounter will occur within a moral framework and that the moral dimension of life will be a part of their dialogue. Some people seek out clergy because they want advice that flows out of this mutually accepted moral framework. Others may seek out clergy simply because they view them as offering a moral perspective on life. Such people may not want advice and may not even accept the moral framework adopted by the cleric. But they still desire care from clergy who are recognized as offering the possibility of moral reflection.

Clergy are often avoided, of course, for precisely the same reason. Experiences of emotional manipulation by guilt motivation lead some people to conclude that a moral perspective is the last thing they need. They think they know what such a perspective on their life would be and they reject it and those whom they associate with it. This reveals the dark side of moral discourse. When it is offered with judgementa-

lism, emotional coercion, or any form of moral bullying, it is always destructive.

Christ was clear about his moral framework and yet his dealings with people were consistently characterized by grace and an absence of coercion. His was a moral perspective that was consistent with genuine dialogue because it offered freedom of expression and supported freedom of choice. Christian soul care is not the place for doing whatever has to be done to ensure that others see and respond to the matters at hand as you do (or as you assume God does). It is, however, an excellent place to offer an opportunity for an examination of life from a Christian perspective and to consider the light which such a perspective sheds on life and its choices.

In his book, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care*, Don Browning notes that a temporary suspension of moral judgements is both possible and appropriate when the moral framework is clear. This was the case in Jesus' dialogical encounters. Because his value framework was very clear to all who met him, Jesus had the freedom to sometimes leave his moral judgements unstated. When the moral framework is clear, there is no need to always state the obvious; judgements can, in such a situation, often be assumed. Browning goes on to argue that it is precisely because clergy work in the context of a community which is engaged in attempts to clarify its value commitments that on many occasions they have the privilege of temporarily bracketing moral issues in their care.

*Wolfram Soldan: In the previous section, Benner speaks about ethical-moral reflection within the framework of counselling in the church. Of particular importance, in my view, is the statement that refraining from explicit moral judgements is fruitful in situations where the shared moral framework is clear, as one could expect among persons belonging to the same congregation. It would in fact be a good thing if basic teaching were given in the most important ethical questions, e.g. in the form of sermons and faith seminars, thus freeing the counselling dialogue itself to some extent from the necessity of explicitly addressing them. Unfortunately, due to the contemporary spirit of individualism and the Post-Modern, the presupposed com-*

*mon framework is constantly becoming more amorphous and crumbly.*

*The role of the pastor in the counselling dialogue is therefore generally moving towards that of the ethically responsible Christian counsellor, while the latter is moving towards the role of the psychotherapist. All are facing the challenge of accepting that ethical reflection is an important part of accompanying the counsel-seeker, without it however being clear from the beginning from which source the standards and orientation are to be taken.*

But what of those who do not work out of such a context and who do not offer a moral framework for their care? An absence of such a framework can easily be construed as suggesting that moral considerations are not important. Such a moral vacuum ultimately leads to a disintegration of the value framework of the individual and of society. It also contributes to moral confusion. Unfortunately, it is not just psychotherapists who have fallen into the trap of thinking that an absence of judgementalism requires an absence of moral reflection and inquiry. Under the influence of therapeutic psychology, pastoral counsellors have too often succumbed to the same folly.

An absence of a moral framework for soul care also suggests that morality is a private and personal matter, a position which when taken to the extreme suggests that each person is ultimately only accountable to him or her self. The privatization of morality has been a consequence of the secularization of the West and the marginalization of the church. Most people acknowledge that moral decisions have to be made in life but seem to operate with the assumption that because these decisions have to be made personally and individually, there is no significant role for shared inquiry on the matter. This is most unfortunate; morality is much too complicated to be left to any of us alone. We desperately need relationships where we can engage in careful reflection on the moral dimension of our life.

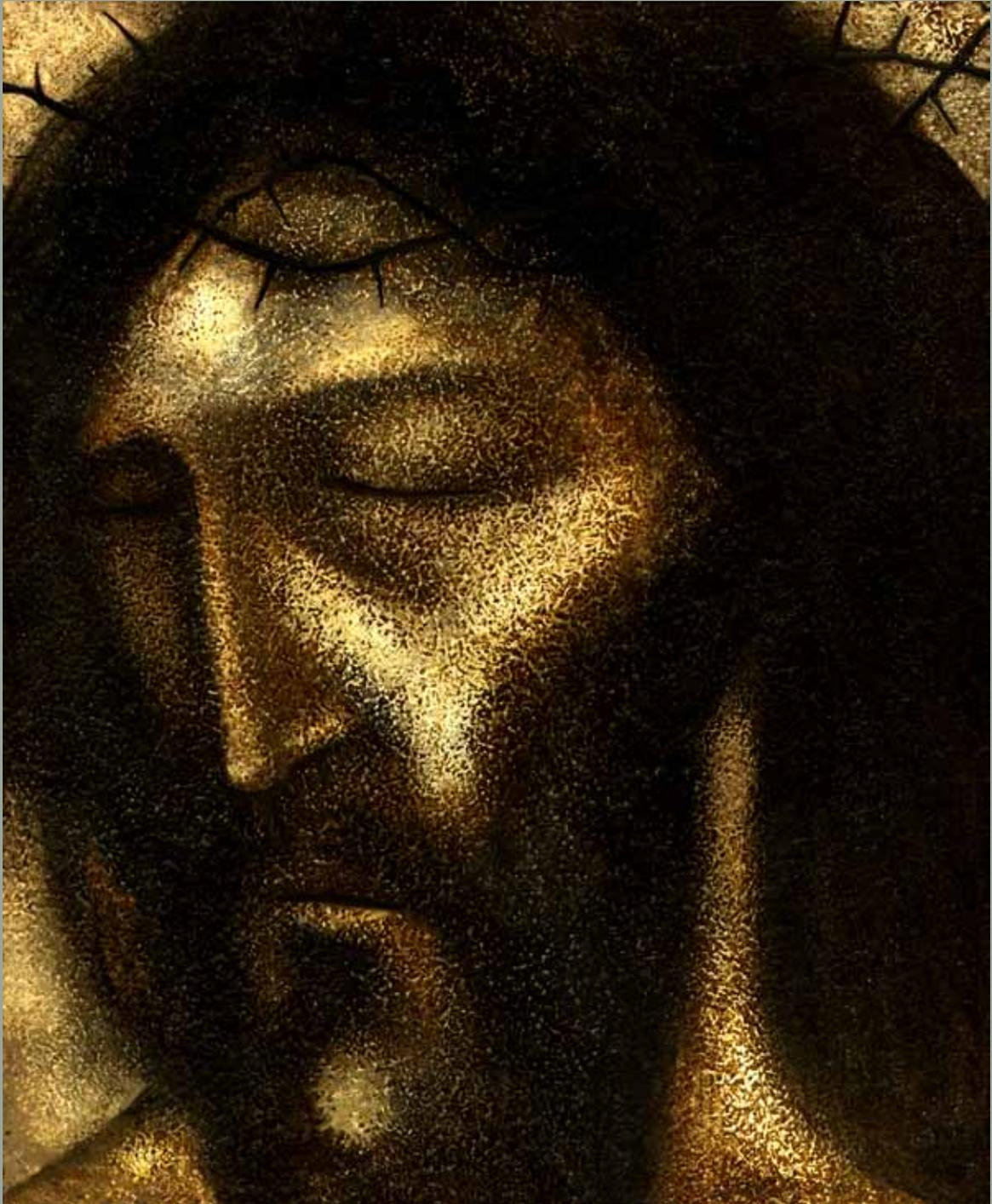
But where does one find such relationships? Where can people turn to reflect on the ethical and moral issues of their business and personal lives? To whom can a person talk about questi-

ons of how to balance work and personal life? Where do people go who wish to explore their response to issues of injustice in their communities? The available contexts for shared inquiry into the moral issues of life are quite limited. At one time, the church played this role for the majority of the members of Western society. But unfortunately, its role has been seriously limited by virtue of the marginalized place which it now occupies in secularized society.

Psychotherapists and counsellors who are willing to engage around these moral questions have been a resource for some people but, as noted earlier, the majority of mental health professionals have been seduced by the erroneous view that psychological problems are unrelated to morality and that moral considerations are, therefore, inappropriate to the therapeutic context. For most people, the most available context for moral reflection is their friendships. In fact, probably the majority of soul care that is provided is that which is offered by friends to friends without any idea that what they are doing is offering *cura animarum*. But, unfortunately, friendships often operate with the same understanding of privatized morality. Consequently, friends often accept arbitrary limits on conversation that make moral discourse and ethical reflection awkward.

*Wolfram Soldan: In its final part of the section on „pastoral conversation“, Benner goes into the important phenomenon of the privatisation of morality/ethics and indicates that, for precisely this reason, the raising of ethical questions during counselling is still most easily managed within friendly relationships (and, I would add, also within a family context). For us Christians, this leads to a dilemma: we usually still believe in the validity of certain general ethical norms. If, however, we bring these directly (judgementally) into a conversation, this can be very easily experienced by the vis-à-vis as an overstepping of boundaries into his private sphere and more or less openly rejected. Since in most cases a common ethical framework of this kind has not been adequately marked out in advance, the accusation of overstepping of boundaries has a justification when this arises in conversation. On the other hand, I am deeply convinced that most people have a longing not to be left alone with their ethical questions.*

*Whether we like it or not, we must usually do without ethical instruction in most conversational contexts, since it does not help us towards our goal. Instead, we require a culture of dialogue which introduces ethical topics invitingly, questioningly and reflectively and, in the process, always listens attentively in order to understand the real inner landscape of my vis-à-vis and also, so to speak, to see where Jesus is active in this landscape at the moment. At the right time, this can include boldly provocative questions. Here, I believe, we Christians have some catching up to do and in many cases we first of all need to allow ourselves to be given the necessary inner freedom, composure and humility. How? Ideally, we allow ourselves to be „morally challenged“ in our lives and convicted by Jesus (and brothers and sisters in faith) so as to gain a deep experience of grace and forgiveness in psychotherapy: self-experience is a central part of developing competence.*



Ecce homo

**Mike Sheldon (Great Britain)**

## **Comment to David G. Benner's "Understanding our Humanity: in Soulful Spirituality, 2011 pp 27-37".**

### **Introductory comments by Mike Sheldon**

*These extracts from the book by Benner attempt to answer one of the fundamental questions which most of us ask at some point - "What makes me a human being?"*

*The first obvious answer is that I am a physical creature with a well developed mind. Benner starts by telling the story of Henri Nouwen who was a gifted professor at several universities, but later went to live with developmentally disabled people at the L'Arche community. He noted that most anthropologists would list the aspects of humanity as self-awareness, speech, conscience, symbolic cognition, imagination and a contemplation of our origins, but all of these were the products of the mind, and living with mentally disabled people had forced him to change his view to understand that the heart was the central part of a human and not the mind.*

"As a human, I am unable to know life as a rock, or as a flower, a bird or a god. I can, however, know life as a human being. Being human is the only way I can truly engage with life. It is, therefore, profoundly important if I want to be fully alive.

But you may wonder if I am making too much of something we can safely take for granted. Perhaps, you might suggest, being human is natural – the default option for beings who are capable of being nothing else. However, while there is truth in the fact that we are not capable of being anything other than human, we are alarmingly capable of being less than fully human. Witness the atrocities we have perpetrated on others whose humanity we have denied because they held beliefs that were different from ours – or because their skins were darker than ours, or

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their otherness too uncomfortable for us.

Or think of the way in which we so easily slip into a kind of oblivion and live like sub-human automatons – devoid of awareness and failing to fully exercise our fundamental human capacity for choice and action.

Being fully alive, fully awake and fully human are far from normal or automatic occurrences. But before we examine more closely why this is and what we can do about it we should first consider the more basic question of what it means to be human. Our answer to this will lay the foundation for our discussion of what it means to live in a manner that is both deeply spiritual and deeply human.

### ***What Makes Us Human?***

Shortly before his death, Henri Nouwen was invited to deliver a special lecture at a university where I was teaching. His years as a professor at Notre Dame, Yale and Harvard universities made his scholarly credentials impeccable. However, his life since leaving the academy suggested that this might be no ordinary academic lecture. He had spent those years in Toronto in the L'Arche community of Daybreak – a community made up of developmentally disabled persons and a few helpers. He came onto the

stage with several of the people he lived with, informing his audience that since moving to Daybreak he never traveled alone. He then invited his Daybreak friends to interrupt him at any point if they had something they wanted to say. Several of them did so, several times. It was, indeed, no ordinary academic lectureship!

The topic of his talk was “What makes us human?” This, he said, had become a central question for him since leaving the world of the Ivy League universities and moving into L’Arche. He began by reviewing the standard list of things suggested by anthropologists and evolutionary psychologists as distinctive to humans – such things as self-awareness, speech and symbolic cognition, conscience, the ability to contemplate our origins and our future, and the capacity to imagine. These, he noted, were all the product of the mind, and consequently, it was the mind that both the academy and the world had come to assume was the centerpiece of our humanity. Living with the developmentally disabled had forced him to rethink this. If the mind was primary in what makes us human, those who were intellectually deficient must be seen as less than fully human. However, life with these wonderful people taught him that they were far from sub-human. From them he learned that it was not the mind but the heart that makes us most fundamentally human.

The assumption that thinking is at the core of what makes us distinctively human is easy to understand since thinking is so present in our experience. Nevertheless, even though our thoughts are fickle, we strongly identify with them. Often they seem to be the most personal things we possess, and in many ways, they are. My thoughts are mine. I can hold them in secret or display them in public ways that present me to best advantage. They are, however, my thoughts. I may not be able to control them, but I do get used to their constant presence and this further strengthens my identification with them. Over time, I also learn that I can use my thoughts to bring comfort when I hurt, coherence when I am confused, and order when I feel threatened by chaos.

### **Dust and Breath**

The Judeo-Christian creation story gives us a helpful way of approaching this important question. The Bible describes the creation of the first human in the following words: “Yahweh God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7). Dust is the stuff of the earth. Humans are creatures of the earth and inextricably connected to the material world. This is vitally important, particularly for anyone interested in spirituality. Whatever spirituality is, it should not be something that pulls us away from the material world. To be human is to have a fundamental attachment to the earth.

Notice what animates this handful of dust – the Divine breath. Divine breath transforms inanimate dust into a living, human person. Christians understand this breath as God’s Spirit – the English word “spirit” coming from the Latin *spiritus*, meaning “breath.” For Christians, our animation comes from the inner presence of the Spirit of God. Humans are connected, therefore, to both heaven and the earth. Life is to be lived with awareness of these two reference points for our identity and meaning. For the development of full-orbed personhood we must be anchored in the material realities of our physical environment but also connected to the ultimate horizon that Paul Tillich called the ground of our being. Our relationship with both is vital to becoming fully human.

Of course, the easiest horizon to lose sight of is the one that is immaterial and is, therefore, unknowable to the senses. This has been the story of modernity in the West, the result being the reduction of humans to their bodies and the de-sacralization of the world. The central place of Divine breath in the various creation stories points us to this easily overlooked horizon.“

### ***Further comments on the above passages.***

*For most of us our thoughts dominate much of our lives. They are the most personal thing we possess. My thoughts are sometimes shared but often held in secret.*



Girl and Flute

*We may have little control over our thoughts, but they bring comfort and order into our lives. As Descartes famously said "I think, therefore I am".*

*However in the Biblical description of the creation of mankind we are told that we are made of dust and Spirit (The breath of God) so that we are made in the image of God. This fusion of Spirit and physical matter is the greatest miracle on earth, and it is you and me! We are therefore connected to the earth, but also to the spiritual realms*

### **„Lightness and Mystery**

“I mentioned the lightness of being that is ours as creatures of dust and breath but want to say more about this because it is very important to an understanding of spirituality. Spirit invites us to live in the place of airy spaciousness and lightness of being that is our origin and destiny. There is something fundamentally wrong with a spiritual journey that makes you more substantial. Creatures of dust and breath are more like works of installation art than something in a permanent exhibition. Ego wants permanence and importance and is disdainful of anything that is here today, gone tomorrow. But, from dust we come and to dust we shall return – everything passing, nothing even to be remembered. (Ecclesiastes 1: 11)

For some, the spiritual journey becomes nothing more than acquiring insights, understandings and experiences. For others it is mastering spiritual practices or acquiring spiritual proficiencies. Sadly, however, these things are all spiritual possessions, and – like any possessions – they easily begin to possess us. Approaching the spiritual life with a need for understanding or a desire for experiences of ecstasy or blessing will quickly produce a spirituality of heaviness, not lightness. A spirituality of lightness is a spirituality of nonattachment in which we resist the temptation to cling to our understanding, our explanations, our experiences, our habits and disciplines, and our beliefs. Real faith is rooted in being willing to acknowledge our fundamental inability to know much about ultimate things. It contents itself with what the Christian mystics have described as living in a cloud of unknowing – and living in that misty place with

lightness of being.

Spirituality that supports the human journey will always be rooted in a life that is open to the vitalizing and transformative breath of Spirit and open to the mysteries of life and faith. It never loses sight of the fact that we never really get spiritual matters, they get us. It appreciates that, in the words of Thomas Moore, “At best we can never be more than approximately correct when we speak about spiritual matters. The part that remains unknown and unspoken gives our words and ideas the emptiness they require.” Authentic spirituality leaves room for mystery and thus helps us preserve the lightness of being that is associated with being creatures of dust and breath.

### **The Spirituality of Being and Becoming**

Authentic spirituality is also a spirituality of becoming. Being itself contains this important dynamic of becoming. The roots of the English language verb “to be” make this clear. The Sanskrit form of this verb is *bhu*. Literally translated, this means “to grow into being” or “to become.” Becoming is a foundational part of being, particularly human being. To be human is to possess a vital drive to become – to relentlessly push toward the goal of fulfilling our self, of becoming all we can be. The quest to flourish is deeply imbedded in being human. From the perspective of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, this quest is rooted in the *imago dei*. The human quest to become is a spiritual reflection of our participation in the life of Spirit.

Becoming balances doing and being. Spiritual teachers sometimes put too much distance between doing and being, as if one could ever be without any doing, or do without any being. The point they are usually trying to make when they assert the priority of being over doing is that all human doing should emerge out of our more basic being. We are, after all, human beings, not human doings. One way to keep doing and being in equilibrium is to keep the horizon of becoming always in sight. The person who is no longer in a process of becoming is a person who has lost something fundamental to full-fledged humanity. Perhaps this state of non-becoming is what Christian theology refers to as hell –

something that for too many people is a present reality that is devoid of becoming and devoid of vitality.

An embrace of becoming all that we can be is a deeply spiritual way of living. It orients us to that which is larger and beyond our individual selves and it channels our vitality and makes life meaningful. It is a spirituality of growth and the fulfillment of our potentialities.“

***Further comments from Mike Sheldon***

*Spirituality which enables us to grow and complete our earthly journey must be open to the transformative influence of God's Spirit. There will therefore always be a large element of mystery in our lives as we have so much more to learn and experience as we grow. We are therefore in a process of "becoming". This journey makes a balance between doing and being. Sometimes we place too much emphasis on doing, and at other times we can over-emphasise being. They are both sides of the same coin, neither is possible without the other*

**Becoming Fully Human**

“Confucian philosophy and developmental psychology share at least two important convictions about being human. Both believe that not only are humans never born fully human, they also believe that the mere passage of time is not in itself sufficient to ensure the development of full human personhood.

Newborns may bear the potential for mature personhood but they do not show any of the characteristics that humanistic psychologists have identified. Markers of fully actualized humanity include such things as a well developed capacity for non-possessive love, being grounded in reality and alive in the present moment, a personal philosophy that makes life meaningful, the capacity for forgiveness and letting go, inner freedom of choice and response, creativity, respect for others, the capacity for reflection on experience, and an identification with all humans, not simply those of one's own kind. Many other things could be added to this list, but even in this partial form it shows the magnitude of the task of achieving full-orbed personhood.

Another way of describing mature personhood is in terms of advances on the various lines of human development. We all differ on such dimensions of life as cognition, moral reasoning, and emotional functioning. Similarly, we differ in terms of the maturity of our ego development, the breadth and openness of our worldview, our capacity for love, and our ability to adopt perspectives other than our own. Underlying all of these are fundamental differences in the development of consciousness itself – the great evolving ocean of awareness on which all phenomena and experiences arise. But while these competencies are all makers of the fully actualized human, none exist at birth and none are acquired simply by the passage of time.

Time is necessary but not sufficient in the human journey. Many other things are also necessary – including adequate love and emotional support, a healthy balance between gratification and frustration, courage, honesty, an openness to experience, a commitment to growth, freedom from both external and internal restrictions, and much more.

Integral psychology – a holistic approach that makes its central concern the evolution of human consciousness – places a similar emphasis on the intentional nature of the journey to full human personhood. Ken Wilber argues that life practices that attend to body, mind and spirit are essential for significant advances on any of the lines of inner development. Some growth comes from openness to life experience but expansion of consciousness – which, in his view, fuels and supports all other development – requires conscious choice and commitment to our becoming all we can be.

Christian teaching has not always been nearly as clear as to just how important becoming human truly is. Sometimes it has seemed to support a spirituality of escape from the human condition, particularly from our bodies, emotions and sexuality. In this, it has failed to take seriously the Bible's clear and strong affirmations of goodness of the material world in general and humanity in particular. Salvation as escape from humanity is sub-Christian. Saint Irenaeus

got it right when he declared that the glory of God is humans fully alive!

This was clearly the message of Jesus. Contrasting himself to those who come to steal or destroy life he declared that the reason he came to earth was to bring abundant life and to help people live that life to the full. (John 10:10) Sometimes, as for example during his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, he described this full life as eternal. (John 4:14) This word eternal is a bit misleading here as it suggests something that would be experienced after death – some sort of immortality. This is not what Jesus was offering. The life that he offered is the life of the Eternal One. It is the life of God, welling up within as a spring of living water.

The real challenge of humanity is more a matter of becoming than simply being. It is about drawing deeply from this inner spring of living water that vitalizes and allows us to become fully human. It is about living in the present, fully awake and ready to engage with life, the people around us, and the world. It is about choosing life.

### **Choosing Life**

Choosing life is not only foundational to deep spirituality in general terms, it is a fundamental part of Judeo-Christian spirituality. Recall the last words of Moses to the Children of Israel just before he died. ( Deut 30:15 – 20) He described two ways of living – a way of life and a way of death. Choosing life, he told them, was choosing God. Equally true, choosing God is choosing life.“

### **Final Comments**

*If we are to complete our lifelong journey to becoming we need many supports in our lives. We all need love and emotional support, add to this courage and hope, an ability to pick ourselves up and learn from our failures and above all - that even in the midst of all our doubts there is the reassurance that God is with us. Jesus often taught that we should strive for life in all it's fullness. We must be fully awake, live life each moment, seek for experiences, engage in relationships, and strive to more fully enter into the presence of God.*

*A concept that has helped me on a daily basis is that Jesus wants to share our lives, to be in the middle of all that we do and think, and so be our companion on this journey of becoming fully human. Above all I need to remind myself that despite my sins, failings and cowardice, God actually loves me and seeks for my growth and maturing so that I may finally become an heir of His Kingdom. What a promise – what a future !*

### References

Thomas Moore, *The Soul's Religion: Cultivating a Profoundly Spiritual Way of Life* (HarperCollins, New York, 2002), p. 13.  
See, for example, Ken Wilber, *Integral Psychology* (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), and, *Integral Spirituality* (Boston: Integral Books, 2007).

Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations are from *The Jerusalem Bible, Readers Edition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966

## Then And Now Response from David G. Benner

I am deeply honoured to have been able to be part of this issue of The EMCAPP Journal and see the way in which my work has been received so hospitably in Europe. Reading things I wrote in several cases more than 30 years ago and have not re-read since was like meeting an old acquaintance – someone vaguely familiar but strikingly different from me as I now experience myself. I welcome the tension associated with this encounter as I am convinced that everything in our lives belongs and forms an important part of who we are and who we are called in our uniqueness to become. But I also welcome Werner May's comments in his opening essay when he indicated his appreciation for what my work has meant to him regardless of the period of my life from which it was drawn.

Rereading the excerpt from my book, *Psychology and Religion*, on Christian counseling and psychotherapy was the most interesting part of this encounter. As I listened to myself argue for the importance of things like sin and repentance it suggested the importance of me beginning with a confession. Although I seem to have had lots of ideas about what makes therapy Christian I confess that in 40 years of clinical practice I have never called myself a Christian counselor or psychotherapist. Nor was I ever a pastoral counselor – this despite the fact that I wrote a book entitled *Strategic Pastoral Counseling* and have long been interested in the relationships of the various forms of soul care to each other. I am very happy to discover that others sometimes find the things I have had to say on these topics helpful but I rest a bit easier after confessing the limits of my personal experience in explicitly Christian or pastoral counseling.

There are some parts of the article on Christian counseling and psychotherapy that I would write differently if I were asked to do so today. I am uncomfortable with my language of a “Biblical view” of persons, and with the list of Biblical themes that I identified as most important. Thirty years later I am more impressed with the fact that the Bible is far from a single book offering

a single perspective on anything. I might, therefore, talk about the importance of cultivating a view of persons that is solidly grounded in the best available psychological scholarship as it is interpreted from within a framework of Christian understandings of the nature of persons and their fundamental existential relationship to the transcendent source of their being. I would also emphasize the importance of understanding the depths and riches of this Christian perspective by placing it not only within the widest possible ecumenical context but also within the larger framework of the perennial wisdom tradition of which Christianity forms a part.

I realize that this would probably not be a satisfactory alternative to a “Biblical view” of persons for someone seeking to offer Christian counseling or psychotherapy. However, it reflects the direction my own clinical practice has taken since about the time I was writing the book from which this article was drawn. I have described my approach as spiritually sensitive psychotherapy. Because it flowed so fully and seamlessly from the wholistic psychospiritual view of persons that I describe in this article perhaps it is worth briefly describing.

### **Spiritually Sensitive Psychotherapy**

Spiritually sensitive therapy starts with the assumption that to be human is to be a spiritual being – created with longings to find our place of ultimate belonging in relation to the Transcendent One in whom we live, move and have our being. This means that spirituality does not have to be added in to the therapeutic process. It is already present. Because the inner world of persons contains no separate psychological and spiritual compartments all problems in living – whether they have their primary roots in our physiology or our psychology – are psychospiritual. All the therapist must do is learn to be attentive to these spiritual dynamics that form part of the psychological problems being explored.

Spiritually sensitive therapy is not religious proselytization, doctrinal instruction, religious formation, or spiritual direction. It does not primarily involve religious or explicitly spiritual dialogue, nor is it reducible to certain spiritual techniques. It involves offering therapy from a spiritually ecumenical perspective, seeking to

David G. Benner



be attentive to both psychological and spiritual dynamics, utilizing the presenting problem as a focus for help as well as an opportunity for psychospiritual growth, and seeking to nurture a response of spirit to Spirit.

Four goals guide spiritually sensitive therapy:

1. To help the client attend to their spiritual longings and become aware of how they have been responding, or may wish to respond, to them
2. If desired, to help the client explore the impact of their religious and spiritual background on functioning
3. If desired, to help the client explore the impact of psychological problems on their spiritual functioning
4. While doing all this, to do everything else that any other well trained psychotherapist would do.

The process of spiritually sensitive therapy starts by building a spiritually open and safe therapeutic alliance. This includes informed consent, avoiding disclosure of details of personal spirituality until asked and restraint even when it is appropriate to answer such questions, communicating an openness to spiritual concerns and an absence of a coercive agenda, dealing with religious differences that exist in a respectful manner, and referring the client to someone else whenever you are unable to do any of these things. It encourages the therapist to begin with a broadly ecumenical spiritual perspective (as opposed to a narrower denominational one) and to express willingness to discuss anything that the client considers relevant and drawn from the spiritual or religious dimension of his or her life.

As these things are addressed it is important to watch for the bias of only seeing the best in one's own tradition and the worst in others. It is also important to watch for the presence of the Spirit both within sessions and in the life of the client, always remaining particularly attentive to what Rudolf Otto described as numinous experiences. While it is appropriate at times to adopt a more explicitly Christian perspective it is important to be slow to align in a more explicitly denominational way. The reason for this caution is the danger of a collusive mis-alliance

that feels good but which blocks effective therapy. And finally, when appropriate, and with informed consent, spiritually sensitive therapy may utilize relevant spiritual interventions that possess demonstrated clinical efficacy with similar problems and people.

This describes the overall framework of the therapy I have provided and taught for many years. I do not offer it as a critique of Christian counseling or psychotherapy but as an alternate way of providing a spiritual approach to therapy.

...

In closing I want to offer my gratitude to those who have responded to my work in this issue. I am appreciative of Mike Sheldon's comments on the excerpt included from my book, *Soulful Spirituality*, and to Wolfram Soldan for his thoughtful interaction with the selection from *Care of Souls*. One of things he mentioned deserves special attention – the importance of a clearer understanding of listening within therapeutic dialogue. I appreciated his reference to listening to “our human and heavenly partners in communication.” Spiritual directors sometimes speak of listening with one ear to the directee (client) and one ear to the Spirit. The point seems to be the same and is important. But it is also important that we think carefully about how a therapist actually does this in the midst of all the other things to which we need to attend – our own thoughts, our associations to our thoughts as well as to the unconscious elements of our interaction, the words and non-verbal communications of the client, and the movement of the Spirit of God within our spirit. Therapeutic listening is not, therefore a simple matter. I judge it to be the hardest and yet at the same time most important part of the therapist's contribution to psychotherapeutic process. From my point of view there has not been enough attention to this topic and I appreciate Wolfram highlighting it.

Finally, I also want to thank Werner May for his excellent work in pulling this issue together, and to the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy. The dialogue you, who are part of this movement are having is impressive and important and I wish you well in it. It has been my great honour to be a part of it.

## David G. Benner Brief Biographical Sketch

Dr. David G. Benner is an internationally known depth psychologist, wisdom teacher, transformational coach, and author whose life's work has been directed toward helping people walk the human path in a deeply spiritual way and the spiritual path in a deeply human way. His passion and calling has been the understanding and pursuit of transformation – not merely healing or even growth, but the unfolding of the self associated with a journey of awakening.

After completing his Ph.D. in clinical psychology at York University in Toronto and post doctoral training at the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis, David has held faculty appointments at York University, University of Toronto, McMaster University Divinity College, Redeemer University College, Wheaton College, Psychological Studies Institute (Richmont Graduate University), the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (University of Victoria), and the Richard Rohr Center for Action and Contemplation and has served as a visiting lecturer Universities throughout Canada, USA, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and South East Asia.

David has authored or edited over 30 books that have been translated into 19 foreign languages. Each presents his signature approach to issues

at the intersection of psychology, philosophy, theology and the perennial wisdom tradition. He writes for a popular readership in a style that reviewers describe as thoughtful and engaging. David's books reflect both his Christian faith and the fact that he holds his beliefs with humility as he journeys with those of any faith or none. Beyond his work in psychology and spirituality his other principal interests are sailing, cycling, jazz, good food and soulful conversation. David and his wife, Juliet, divide their time between Toronto, Canada and Lima, Peru. He can be found online at [www.drdauidbenner.ca](http://www.drdauidbenner.ca), and his daily social media posts on walking the human path in a deeply spiritual way and the spiritual path in a deeply human way can be found on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/DrDavidGBenner](http://www.facebook.com/DrDavidGBenner)) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/drdauidbenner>).

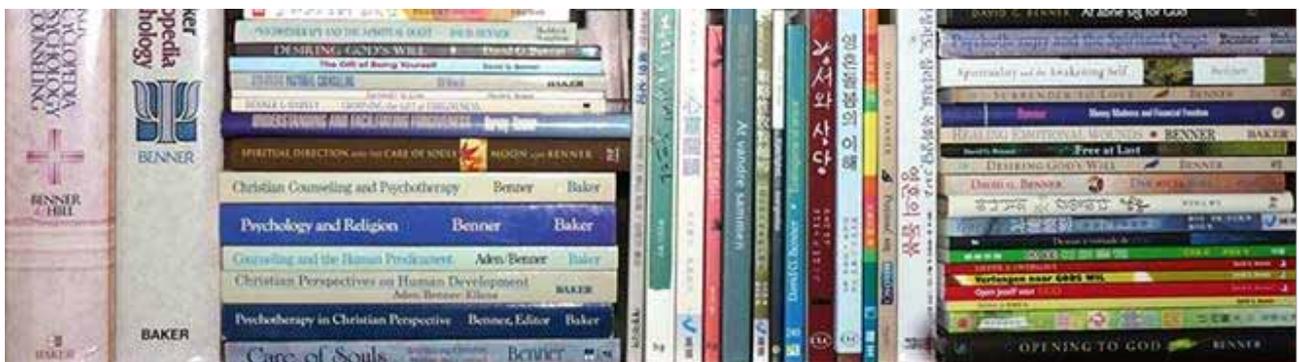


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Invitation to write us about the topic of the Forum on our new Blog

# New:

## The blog of the free e-Journal



### Regarding the current forum topic

Recently, a colleague asked me to tell him in three sentences how I would explain Christian psychology.

We have a German proverb “in der Kürze liegt die Würze.” [“In brevity lies the seasoning”]. This means that a short formulation can be more comprehensible than a long and detailed one. Well-seasoned food is a joy, but can also be a provocation.

1. A Christian psychology is based on a biblical concept concerning humans and the world, as well as based on past and present experiences evaluated in a critical dialogue with this concept (church history).
2. Psychological research, teaching, and practice is molded by the presence of the triune God, whose engagement is marked by love, healing, blessing and leading.
3. Interesting and valuable results and insights from the whole of psychology should be worked through on the basis of point one and two.

The following forum topic, “Guidance through the Holy Spirit during the counseling or therapy session: blessings and problems” is located in the second statement, that God is present, and therefore may lead us in counseling and therapy processes. The contributions are different, e.g. characterised by a critical dialogue (Point 1), related to general psychological experiences (Point 3)...

In a new step, we have set up a blog for this forum. This is the link to our blog:

<https://christianpsychologyaroundtheworld.wordpress.com/>

Our hope and our invitation is, that you personally will communicate your opinions and experiences concerning this topic, as well as comment on follow-up contributions.

Here is the link to the commentary field:

<https://christianpsychologyaroundtheworld.wordpress.com/2015/06/17/hallo-welt/#comments>

## Vibeke Møller (Denmark)

As we want to answer this question we have to look at The Holy Spirit's role, the Christian counselor's and psychotherapist's role, the counselee's role and on the blessings and problems

### The Holy Spirit's functions

When we go to the various translations of the Bible we find a lot of different names and functions of the Holy Spirit:

Helper, the Spirit of truth, comforter, guide, advocate, counselor, the redeemer of the accursed, teacher, Spirit of grace, revealer of sin. Most of those and functions we could use in our own practice as a Christian counselor or psychotherapist. Our work as a Christian counselor/psychotherapist should be the Holy Spirit's work. The Holy Spirit can change counselees' lives so that they recover, become healed and restored. Because our effort to help people with various problems of life we should be anointed and guided by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. God wants us as Christian counselors/psychotherapists to be effective and help people to change. The Holy Spirit can influence the mind and change the will, can produce the fruit of the Spirit. The goal of counseling and psychotherapy is growth of the counselee

### The Christian counselor or psychotherapist's role

As Christian counselors or psychotherapists it is very important to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit if we want to be effective in your work/ ministry. The question arises: How do we become sensitive?

- Reading the word of God and meditating on it
- Prayer and intercession
- Living a life in agreement with the Bible
- Personal growth
- Maturity
- Spiritual development

### The counselee's role:

What about the counselee? Must the counselee be a Christian before the Holy Spirit can/will reveal anything that can be a help for the counselee? I think that the Holy Spirit can talk to Christian and non-Christians. John 16:7- 8 (NIV): the counselor(the Holy Spirit) when he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

The Christian counselor or psychotherapist and the counselee have a dialogue. The Holy Spirit can talk to /influence the counselor /psychotherapist, the Christian counselor/psychotherapist can talk to/influence the counselee and the counselor/psychotherapist can talk/influence to each other.

# “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”



Vibeke Møller (Denmark), MD, psychotherapist, director and owner of IPSICC – International Psychotherapeutic School in Christian Culture.

**The blessings and problems:**

I really find there are many blessings when we rely on the Holy Spirit in counseling and therapy. Sometimes we get a revelation from the Holy Spirit about a client. The question is then: Do we reveal it to the client during the session or do you wait? Often we think that we have to reveal it immediately. If it is truth it can wait until it is appropriate.

What does it mean to be led by the Holy Spirit in counseling? Often people have in mind when they mention their perception of the Holy Spirit's activity that it is an experience of feeling and intuition- we can "sense" the Spirit's movement. If the Holy Spirit is present He can do more powerful things more than what we feel. Our feelings may not be the primary way to perceive it. Our feelings can lead us astray and they may not be the truth such that our emotional experiences are more hints of some other factors at play other than the Holy Spirit's work.

There is a danger to identify our emotions as sure signs of the Holy Spirit's work. Jonathan Edwards in his book – Religious Affection 1746 wrote how easily affections—necessary though they are—can be misguided (Religious Affections By Jonathan Edwards, 1746).<sup>1</sup> Their fervor is no certain sign that the Holy Spirit is the one at work. Emotions are maybe not sure sign of the Holy Spirit at work.

**John Frame a theologian and philosopher has said (the Doctrine of Knowledge of God):**

We need to see things from 3 perspectives - triperspectivalism:

- Normative –which has to do with God's revelation, his standard of truth, his authority
- Situational – facts and circumstances of the world
- Existential – human expectations, our perceptions, feelings and our experiences of God

**He says:**

*„Every item of human knowledge is the application of God's authoritative norm to a fact of creation by a person in God's image. The existential perspective is the most natural frame of reference for understanding the leading of The Holy Spirit in counseling. You cannot have one perspective without the others. They depend on each other.“*

So what he means is that we can only see things from a limited perspective at a time. God alone sees and knows everything from all perspective at once. This is the only way to know perfectly. We humans know in parts. When it comes to understanding the leading of the Holy Spirit in counseling too much emphasis is on the existential without taking in to account by the normative and situational. This will lead to errors.

Another error is being out of step with the Holy Spirit because we have a narrow and nearsighted view of what the Holy Spirit is doing and want. So let us strive after to become counselors/psychotherapists that are led by the Holy Spirit and not only by our feelings and perceptions.

## “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”

## Peter Milnes & Genevieve Milnes (Australia)

Let me report a personal experience of “guidance” received during counseling that did not bring blessings:

*Me: I feel that I am in a dark place.*

*Therapist: I have a word from the Holy Spirit about you. I see you walking into a dark place because of the demon of pride that you carry. What do you think about that? Is there anything you need to confess?*

*Me: Yes, um, I can certainly see the dark place because that’s why I have come here. And the pride, yes I can see that I probably have a little of that too.*

Next session (a week later):

*Therapist: What did you think about last session?*

*Me: Well I thought about it.*

*Therapist: What sort of pride do you think it could be?*

*Me: I don’t know.*

*Therapist: Well let’s ask for guidance of the Holy Spirit so that you can be freed from the demon of pride ...*

*Me: Well, not right now ... (I never went back).*

While the first session may have had spiritual value, the second session did not. In spite of the loaded language, I had been open to exploration of the “pride I carried” being a source of darkness and thought about it during the following week. However, the second session revealed that, no matter what my therapist intended, she was starting down a pathway that placed her revelations as a “voice of God” which I was expected to passively accept. In spite of the difficulties that I was facing at the time, this second session led me to seek counseling elsewhere because my therapist had already begun crossing into the classic “eight methods of thought reform” outlined by Lifton<sup>1</sup>:

- milieu control (my therapist allowed no other explanation in the session, the problem was spiritual and I needed the Holy Spirit to liberate me from the demon of pride.);
- mystical manipulation (my therapist heard from God and not me – I was expected to accept this as “truth”.);
- demand of purity (in the “black-and-white world” of my therapist, I was either under bondage to pride and darkness or liberated by her “guidance”.);
- cult of confession (my therapist encouraged me to confess elements of “pride” in my life during counselling so that I could be cleansed. These confessions could be used later.);
- sacred science (my therapist held the gnosis [knowledge of the truth] so that her claims/insights were as true as the Divine);

<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Lifton (1969) Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1969.

## “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”



Dr Peter Milnes (PhD, M.Ed.Admin, B.Div., B. Educ.) is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the School of Law and Justice at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia as well as a therapist specializing in Transactional Analysis at Psychology Australia. Peter is an ordained minister who served for eight years in Brazil as a director of a cross-cultural studies centre and semi-inary lecturer.

- loaded language (where my therapist referred to a “dark place”, and a “demon of pride”);
- doctrine over the person (instead of exploring possible sources of my “darkness”, my therapist’s revelations fully explained all.);
- dispensing of existence (through continued submission to her counseling and prayer, my existence could be made “whole”).

This may be an extreme example of guidance of the Holy Spirit during counselling but it does serve to alert us to the perils that may be encountered and remind us to think about potential blessings and problems.

While I suffered no long term effects because it was a brief encounter, other experiences of “thought reform process” ascribed to the Holy Spirit have led to over-dependence and painful disengagement if attempted<sup>2</sup>. More than a century ago, Jessie Penn-Lewis’ observed similar extremes in the Welsh revival:

“The truth to be emphasized is that God never ‘wills’ instead of man, and whatever a man does, he is himself responsible for his actions”<sup>3</sup>.

Penn-Lewis described a “passivity” of mind, conscience, and spirit as wrong humility<sup>4</sup> that endangers the soul. The counseling process should free people from their therapists so that clients work out their own salvation<sup>5</sup> rather than passively awaiting the next revelation.

From this discussion you may think that we are suggesting that the Holy Spirit does not have any place in the counselling room and that Christian therapists should depend only upon the insights received in professional training. The answer is more nuanced. Any Christian should be “led by the Spirit” in carrying out the demands of their profession - and a Christian therapist is no different. Having received training, a professional Christian therapist is given space to apply the principles so that it benefits others. In therapy, neither the counselor nor the client are passive automatons awaiting guidance of the Holy Spirit. Therapy should assist client pilgrims in their personal search of the Holy Spirit’s “still small voice”<sup>6</sup> and should take an active part in applying it to their multi-faceted lives. The Holy Spirit guidance in this therapy would be far different from what I experienced. Instead of bluntly sharing a revelation from God that “the darkness came from a demon of pride”, a therapist may say to the client who has just stated that he feels a “darkness in life”, to “Tell me about the darkness”, “Are there any sources of light”? “Where do you think the darkness may have come from?” While a therapist may suspect that “pride” may be the “cause of the darkness” this is held back because it could be just plain wrong.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Shofar B. explained his “road to NIGHTMARE”. <https://kimolsen.wordpress.com/.../a-testimony-how-god-rescued-me-from-bill-johnsons-cult/>. Downloaded, 20 April, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> J. Penn-Lewis (1915/1996) *War on the Saints*. Whitaker House, Springdale, p.34.

<sup>4</sup> J. Penn-Lewis (1915/1996) *War on the Saints*. Whitaker House, Springdale, chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup> Philippians 2:12.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 19:12.

## “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”



Dr Genevieve Milnes is a Clinical Psychologist working in Perth, Western Australia. She is the National President of Christian Counsellors Association of Australia. Genevieve has a Bachelor of Divinity, a Masters in Applied Psychology (Clinical & Educational) and a Masters in Counseling. She coordinates the West Australian sector of the Christianity and Psychology Interest Group of the Australian Psychological Society. Genevieve lived and worked in Brazil for 8 years with her husband and family.

Any linkage should emerge in the counseling process. The therapist assists the client to search themselves for the causes of their own darkness and to reach for the light.

Furthermore, from experience, the work of the Holy Spirit is “person-centred” rather than “other-centred”. In other words, Holy Spirit guidance is directed toward our personal roles as therapists rather than at the “other” or client - for example, when mistakes have been made or impasses reached, the Holy Spirit may respond to a therapist’s silent prayer by gently revealing points of error or suggesting other approaches. Referring back to my own “therapy”, soul-searching revealed that recent harsh experiences had crushed me. My soul required building up rather than subjected to a therapist’s “word from God” and a search for a demon of pride. For the therapist, maybe the Holy Spirit’s role would have revealed the dangers of the thought reform in her practice or suggested ways that she could more fully walk in the Spirit<sup>7</sup> herself.

## “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”

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<sup>7</sup> Galatians 5:16.

**David W. Appleby (USA)**

## **Using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Counseling**

I was surprised to be asked to write on this topic. I have been doing counseling on some level for more than forty years, have served in the pastoral ministry for sixteen years, teach counseling in graduate school, and been involved in the deliverance (exorcism) ministry for more than thirty years and know that some of these activities require using the gifts of the Holy Spirit more than others. But how do I access them? Is there a switch which, if thrown, suddenly causes my mind to be filled with supernatural information? I don't think so. Before we begin, however, please recognize that I, by no means, consider myself an expert on how to utilize the gifts of the Holy Spirit in counseling. All I can tell you today are some of the assumptions under which I operate, and some of the practices that I use. I hope these will be helpful.

### **Assumptions**

First assumption: God has wired each of us for communication. The Scriptures are full of many people who communicated with God in different ways. Samuel, the Old Testament prophet, heard the Lord's voice and had visions. Peter saw a sheet filled with unclean animals. Angels appeared to a number of people. Even Ananias, a relative nobody, apparently had a divine GPS that told him, turn by turn, how to find the house of the man who would become the Apostle Paul. John 10 is full of language that points to the fact that God's people hear, recognize, and will follow his voice.

Second assumption: God has wired us so that we can accomplish his purposes. He has given us a sensitivity to spiritual things so that we can be aware of both the Spirit of the Lord and unclean spirits. Many times God communicates with us through the use of spiritual gifts. The "tools," listed in I Corinthians 12:7-11 are wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues and are each given to us for the common good. This toolbox has been given to us so that what God builds can be stronger, whole, and function more effectively.

Third Assumption. God has uniquely wired each of us because he wants to communicate with us and through us so that we can help others. All the gifts of the Spirit require that we be able to hear, recognize, and obey his voice if these gifts are to be properly utilized with the people of his choosing at the time of his choosing. Regardless of the gift, we need to be able to recognize when God is communicating with us and what he is communicating with us.

## **“Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”**



David W. Appleby, Ph.D., Ph.D., has spent 16 years in the pastoral ministry. He currently is president of Spiritual Interventions and a pastoral counselor at Wyndhurst Counseling Center and is a graduate professor in the Department of Counseling and Family Studies at Liberty University, both in Lynchburg, VA (USA).

### Practices

First Practice: Be intentional in seeking for the gifts. I Corinthians 14:1 tells us that we are to eagerly pursue spiritual gifts.

Second Practice: Be expectant. If you don't expect anything to happen, nothing will. Most normal people don't stand waiting in a train station unless they expect a train to come.

Third Practice: Recognize the means by which God communicates. One way that God communicates with us is by inserting his thoughts into our minds. These thoughts feel like our own internal voice except that it has a slightly different "accent." God's thoughts feel like you are „being talked to“ somewhat directionally with a kind of pause after the thoughts, as if the Lord is saying, „Okay, so will you speak out/act on what I just said to you?“ Our own thoughts, by contrast, feel like they are just arising within us, one leading to another, to another, etc., without much force or clarity. God's voice doesn't "rise," it "pops." Sometimes it makes you ask, "What was that?" It is presented in a way that causes it to stand out as being different from the rest of our thoughts. The words are a different "color;" otherwise we would not notice them and consider them to be just a random thought. Many times you won't be waiting for it, nor will the thought pertain to a subject about which you have been thinking. Those who "hear" such things are often wired for sound.

Another way this revelation can come is through pictures, visions, or dreams. These pictures may be experienced as external to us as a vision that is "layered" upon our vision of the external world, or internally as a picture projected upon our mind's eye. Many times these pictures come with no interpretation and are interjected into our minds as the Lord desires. And, like the words mentioned above, the pictures, images, or visions have a different quality to them.

The Lord can also communicate through feelings. Feelings can arise in us that have no correlation with the situation in which we find ourselves. We may suddenly be overcome with fear while we are speaking to a client even though there is no reason for us to be afraid. Being suddenly flooded with these sensations will cause you to ask, "Where did that come from? Why am I feeling this way?"

An individual who is working in the Spirit is not limited to only one of these means. Sometimes he will communicate with us interjecting thoughts, other times through the use of visions, still other times by the use of feelings. Since God is the one who gives these gifts as needed, he is free to give any of them to any of us anytime he chooses.

Fourth Practice: Note that these gifts often function in groups of three. Wisdom, knowledge, and discernment are often lumped together, as are faith healing, and miracles. Prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues are also often blended together in their expression.

## “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”

Fifth Practice: Take a chance. There is no way that we can know if these thoughts, pictures, or feelings are from the Lord or from our own minds unless we confirm them with those for they were intended. “This thought just popped into my head. Does it apply in any way to you?” “I just saw this picture in my mind’s eye. Does it mean anything to you?” “I suddenly experienced an overwhelming sense of regret. Is that a significant factor in your life?”

If we frame the practice of these gifts in this way with clients we can calibrate or fine tune the gift. If we were right, then we know what the voice of the Lord sounds like, how God can interject an image into our mind, or how he can use our emotions to help us discern what is taking place. If we get it wrong, well, then that may not have been the Lord. Remember, however, that you might have still heard the voice of the Lord even though the client denies the revelation. Clients have been known to lie. The more you practice, the more accurate you will become, and the more your faith will grow.

Fifth Practice: Learn to live with sometimes getting it wrong. 1 Corinthians 13:12 says “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” For me, the rewards of accurately discerning the voice of the Lord greatly outweigh the risks of getting it wrong. Why not take a chance?

## “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”

William R. Miller (USA)

## Accessing Wisdom during Psychotherapy: From Information to Transformation

Many have written about stages or processes through which one passes in becoming a psychotherapist. A model I find useful is Tobin Hart's (2009) treatise on the evolution of consciousness in which he described six "depths of knowing" in the process of education more generally. Most shallow of these acquiring facts or information with which one can know something about a subject. With experience information can (but does not necessarily) become knowledge reflected in competence, the ability to demonstrate a skill. Hart termed the third level intelligence, an ability to use the knowledge flexibly, to reflect on and evaluate one's own work by grasping both the how and the why of practice. A further depth emerges in understanding that takes into account the interpersonal relationship within which practice occurs. This requires empathy, the ability to understand, accept and accommodate another's perspective. Many therapists would assume that a competent practitioner should manifest all four of these levels.

It is at the fifth level of wisdom that Hart began to draw on the ancient insights of sages and mystics. A key indicator of this depth is discernment: knowing which inclinations to trust and follow: "when and how to linger and when to move on" (p 111). Wisdom involved intuiting, timing, patience, vulnerability, curiosity, and comfort with ambiguity. It goes beyond the logical intelligence of why and how, beyond the relational perspectives of understanding to be guided by something more.

Yet what is this "something more" and to what extent should we trust it? This involves being aware that such wisdom is accessible, attending to it, and discerning when guidance is coming from a reliable source versus our own ego. Many names are given to a source of deeper wisdom: Holy Spirit, agape, inner or third eye, collective unconscious, true self, Buddha mind, the eye of the Tao. The concept crosses world religions, which vary in advice on how to discern reliable guidance. Collective discernment is emphasized in various transitions including Quaker and Presbyterian faiths, but is not readily available to a psychotherapist in session except by accessing the client's own wisdom, which is surely an option (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). "How do you know when to rely on felt guidance?" is a worthwhile question that can be explored in the context of supervision or collegial consultation.

Hart described a further level of depth as transformation, when wisdom becomes not just what you do but who you are. It becomes integrated, natural, mature, creative, flowing. There is "no one else to tell us the truth" (p. 170) because the truth is written on the heart. We may aspire to such depth, but as a Presbyterian and a scientist I worry about any claim to have achieved it that is not accountable to collective discernment.

## "Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems"



William R. Miller, Ph.D., Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry, The University of New Mexico. Dr. Miller's publications include 40 books and over 400 articles and chapters. Fundamentally interested in the psychology of change, he has focused in particular on the development, testing, and dissemination of behavioral treatments for addictions.

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## Sarah Groen-Colyn

As I begin these brief reflections, I come instantly to our first problem: We cannot explain the Holy Spirit – “There is nothing we can merely know about the Holy Spirit” (Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, p. 105). But we do know Him, and because of this incarnate, embodied-in-flesh knowing perhaps we can say something about what it’s like to collaborate with Him in a therapy session. I will discuss one blessing and one problem that we counselors and therapists experience as we receive the Holy Spirit as our gift: the blessing of naturalness and our problem with recklessness.

First, we are blessed with naturalness. What could be a purer joy than getting to be who you really are, to experience life the way it was meant to be? This is what happens when we work with the Holy Spirit in the counseling process, because collaborating with Him and moving in His charisms is the most natural state of redeemed man. It is natural to us to receive God, abide in Him, and have our created gifts taken up into His divine energy and purposes. It is separation from God that is unnatural; the fracturing and distorting consequences of sin deprive us of our created, innate capacity to hear and obey God.

In Christian reality, grace builds on nature. It seems to me that most Christian counselors are drawn to this vocation because it puts to good use the gifts that make us who we are. As we access restored relationship with God through the cross of Christ (and therefore are indwelt by the Holy Spirit), we find ourselves relating to our clients in the most naturally charismatic way. The Spirit takes our natural gifts of concern, compassion and wisdom and builds them into the charisms of discernment, mercy and exhortation. While this certainly yields blessings for our clients (such as supernatural comfort and insight), I’m drawing our attention to what may be an even richer blessing, that we ourselves are becoming more human, more real, more natural. In my moments of strongest collaboration with the Holy Spirit, I am more fully myself than I knew was possible and am most blessed. And because counseling is an ongoing relational process, the counselor’s own naturally charismatic becoming generates an abundant overflow of blessings in that relationship and all others.

Now to our problem: recklessness. I believe we resist the recklessness of receptivity to the Holy Spirit. Agnes Sanford directs those who would be guided by Him to make this reckless request: “We must with understanding and faith ask the Holy Spirit to invade us and fill us” (*The Healing Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 141). To be truly open to the Spirit’s invading indwelling requires repentance; we must turn away from our sinful inclination to self-determination. The ego shrinks back from true abandonment to God, demanding understanding before obedience. Pride can even hide such resistance in the cloak of rationalism.

## “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”



**Sarah Groen-Colyn**, PhD in Clinical Psychology, MA in Christian Leadership (Fuller Seminary, accredited by the American Psychological Association). She is the Director of Ministries of Pastoral Care ([ministriesofpastoralcare.com](http://ministriesofpastoralcare.com)) and the founder of Sanctuary Psychological Services. She will have the pleasure serving with the Ministries of Pastoral Care team in Germany in October, 2014, when the NIS Netzwerk ([nis-netzwerk.de](http://nis-netzwerk.de)) is offering a seminar to share Leanne’s work with Christian counselors and ministry leaders. [sarah@ministriesofpastoralcare.com](mailto:sarah@ministriesofpastoralcare.com)

*“The concept of listening to God and moving in the power and authority He gives to heal is strangely alien to many modern Christians. They have become dependent upon medical science for their healing needs, and upon the secular (both rational and occult) psychologies and therapies devised for gaining personal wholeness” (Payne, *The Healing Presence*, p. 44).*

Oswald Chambers gives this wonderful directive for receptivity to God: when you hear God speak, “be reckless immediately, fling it all out on Him” (My Utmost for His Highest, June 18). This fruitful recklessness is not the impulsivity of a lazy, self-indulgent counselor who lacks discipline and wisdom, but the radical abandoning of self to Christ that is the way of life. To be clear, I am advocating abandonment to the Holy Spirit by well-trained, ethically excellent mental health professionals who practice with supervision, consultation, and continuing education. This is sternly magnificent work that allows grace to build on nature, for we must be excellent scholars and clinicians. But I believe our biggest problem with it is that it requires great humility.

*“If he is to move in God’s power and authority, the servant of the Lord must know that even the best wisdom of the day is insufficient. It cannot fully grasp the mystery of the human spirit, soul, and body. Looking to God and listening to Him is essential” (Payne, *The Healing Presence*, p. 45).*

As I described earlier, looking to God and listening to Him is natural to us, and in truth it is the most practical and secure way to function. Yet to anything in us that craves certainty or control, or bows to any ideology, listening to God and moving on the Word He sends seems reckless. Thankfully, this problem becomes a blessing as we die to those lesser motives and live to Christ:

*“The gifts and the fruits of His life are present and can radiate through me. I am thus empowered by His indwelling Presence to heal in His name” (Payne, *The Broken Image*, p. 164).*

## “Guidance Through the Holy Spirit During the Counseling or Therapy Session: Blessings and Problems”

An article by Sarah:  
<http://emcapp.ignis.de/5/#/98>

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# The Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care

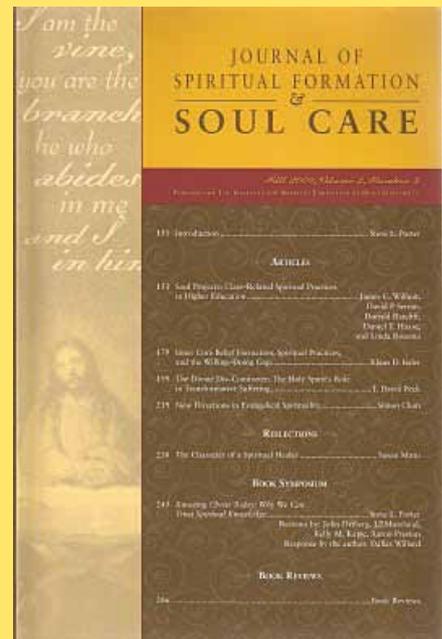


## Agnes May, Germany

Training in religious education and adult education. Since 1998 at the IGNIS Institute as editor, writer and adult educator for the correspondence course Foundations of Christian Psychology, since 2004 as person in charge of this course.

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Articles by Agnes: <http://em-capp.ignis.de/2/#/48>



## Spirituality, Spiritual Formation, Spiritual Direction, Spiritual...

Since May 2008, the Talbot School of Theology Institute for Spiritual Formation at Biola University, has published a new journal, the Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care.

This journal is introduced as a peer-reviewed journal published twice a year. The purpose of the journal is to advance the discussion of the theory and practice of Christian formation and soul care for the sake of the educational ministries of the church, Christian education and other para-church organizations through scholarly publications that are rooted in biblical exegesis, systematic theology, the history of Christian spirituality, philosophical analysis, psychological theory/research, spiritual theology, and Christian experience <http://journals.biola.edu/sfj>

Thus, this journal is a discussion platform and a source of reflected information on the field of the actually growing influence of spiritual formation in evangelical contexts.

You will get some free articles on their website:

- The Call and Task of this Journal by Dr. John Coe
- Introduction to the Inaugural Issue by Dr. Steve Porter
- Sanctification in a New Key: Relieving Evangelical Anxieties Over Spiritual Formation by Dr. Steve Porter

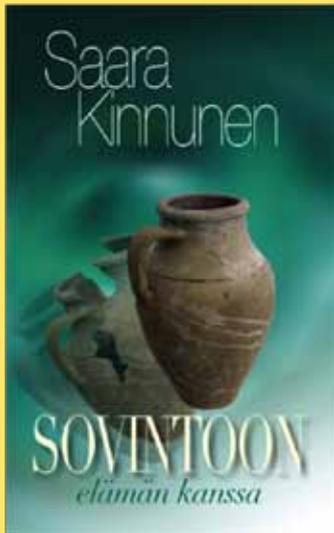
- Introduction to the Special Theme Issue: Dallas Willard & Spiritual Formation by Dr. Gary Moon and Dr. Steve Porter
- Embracing Jesus in a First Century Context: What Can It Teach Us about Spiritual Commitment? by Dr. Darrell L. Bock
- Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation by Dr. Richard E. Averbeck

The latest issue (Vol 7/2) discusses spiritual formation in the academy and the church. Different authors look at the “state of union” between spiritual formation and systematic theology, historical theology, psychology, philosophy, soul care, or the church.

And in Vol 7/1 you can read articles about “gospel-shaped embodied life” and “the practice of contemplative prayer in an evangelical context”. Other contributions were “Are the Spiritual Disciplines of „Silence and Solitude“ Really Biblical?” (Vol 2/1); “Spiritual Formation and Multiethnic Congregations” (Vol 4/2) or “A Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission” (Vol 6/1).

I think that the Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care provides helpful texts for those being attracted as well as for those being doubtful or looking for a deeper understanding of spiritual formation. Get your own impression on <http://journals.biola.edu/sfj>.

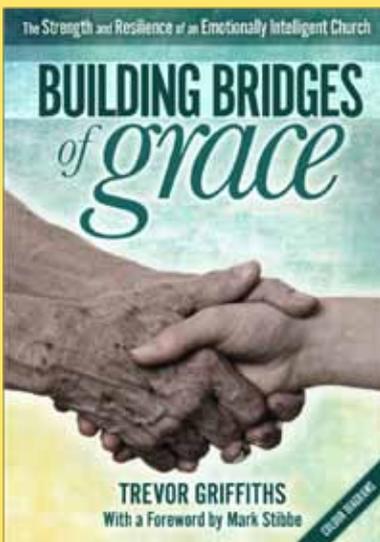
## Books of EMCAPP-Friends, published 2014-15



**Saara Kinnunen (Finland)**  
**Reconciliation with Life (in Finnish).**  
**Perussanoma 2014.**

Saara Kinnunen, who holds a Master's degree in both in Philosophy and Political Science, is a Social Psychologist and a Psychotherapist. Her book *Reconciliation with Life* integrates in one volume aspects of Christian faith, several theories in the field of psychotherapy and a thorough clinical experience in both psychotherapy and Christian counseling.

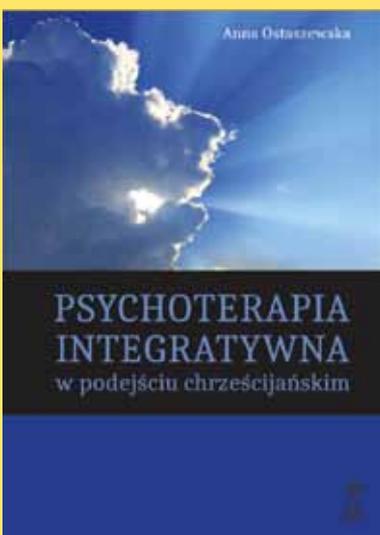
See more: <http://emcapp.ignis.de/6/#/200>



This book by **Trevor Griffiths** (Great Britain) explains why Stephen Hawkins will never be able to develop a 'Theory of Everything', because first physics needs a 'Theory of Everyone'. Thinking and feeling have to be parts of such theories...

**Building Bridges of Grace: The strength and resilience of an emotionally intelligent Church** tells the story how understanding triune principles opens a new World beyond the arguments between traditional Christian religions: Eastern Orthodox; Roman Catholic; Reformed Protestant. It gives a scientific basis for both a secular and a spiritual call to safe reconciliation in this new Millennium. A new world order can emerge by triune prayer.

Buy from [www.Amazon.co.uk](http://www.Amazon.co.uk) or [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) – Kindle, or hard copy.



**Anna Ostaszewska (Poland)**  
**Integrative Psychotherapy, a Christian Approach (in Polish),**  
**2015**

In the concept impress with a lucid, coherent and systematic exploration of the interface between integrative psychotherapy and spirituality in which she distinguish between healthy and unhealthy spirituality. The author made a reasoned and substantial case for the assimilation of spirituality into her approach to integrative psychotherapy which neither compromises her faith nor the profession of psychotherapy. This is a commendable achievement. The capacity to speak with authority to both worlds is rare in my experience. (Kenneth Evans)



**Olga Krasnikova**  
**“Loneliness” (in Russian)**  
**Nikea, 2015.**  
 (“Personal growth” book series)

Olga Krasnikova — counseling psychologist, psychology lecturer, the head of the psychological center „Sobesednik”, rector assistant of Moscow ICP.

The book is dedicated to the problem of loneliness. The „solo“ way of life is widespread today. But Olga Krasnikova’s book is not about formally lonely existence which, by the way, can be comfortable. It is about deep loneliness. About the broken communication of a person with other people, with the world, and first of all - with himself.

This dissonance can occur at any time, in bitter and joyful circumstances, and even in quite safe family life background. It is impossible to overcome the feeling of senselessness and emptiness, reestablish the lost communication until the person adjusts the dialogue with himself, accepting his existential loneliness. It is amazing how many of us avoid meeting with ourselves. What is that we don’t accept in ourselves or are afraid of? The quiet and wise book of Olga Krasnikova helps us to understand it.

**Olga Krasnikova**  
**„Delays and unfulfilled promises“ (in Russian)**  
**Nikea 2014**  
 (“Personal growth” book series)

There are people who are always late. And there are those who always come in time and become nervous when they are forced to wait. There are fans of promise, but not its performing. Others, on the contrary, are trying to keep their word and demand the same from others. Anyway, we are suffering from delays and unfulfilled promises - our own or others, so the book by the psychologist Olga Krasnikova applies to absolutely everyone. After reading it, you can understand why some people are so hard to come in time, and learn how to minimize the damage caused by their own or someone else carelessness and perhaps become a little more tolerant.



**Werner May (Germany)**  
**Instructions for astonishment. Becoming rooted in mystery. (in German)**  
 IGNIS-Edition, Kitzingen, 2014  
 (Anleitungen zum Staunen. Sich im Geheimnis verwurzeln. )

- Astonishment keeps you young. Because children are astonished. We capture something of being a child again when we are astonished: spontaneous or carefree reactions, all that is natural to children, become available to us as adults.
- Being astonished motivates us to want to know more about what we are astonished by. We notice there is still much for us to experience. Space for experience opens up surprisingly and therefore with freshness.
- Being astonished awakens in us a fundamental sense of something greater or more significant, tends to draw us up beyond ourselves. This not only motivates us, but also makes us more humble, more ready to receive.

## Next Number

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Focus Country:  
South Africa



### 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 practitioners 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: The main articles of each number will be prepared by a focus country.

Publisher, Editor: Werner May  
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Interactive design, Webdesign:  
Heiko Gneuß, pro-webART  
<http://www.pro-webART.com>

Many thanks to the numerous authors, to the translators, and especially to Michael O'Brien. Without their commitment and gifts this number would not exist.

### The Board of EMCAPP:

- Francesco Cution (Italy), clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, associate of the Italian Catholic Association of Psychologists and Psychiatrists, president founder of the association "Jonas is on the way", Rome.
- Nicolene Joubert (South Africa) psychologist, Head of the ICP: the Institute of Christian Psychology in Johannesburg [www.icp.org.za](http://www.icp.org.za).
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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.



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Association of Christian Counsellors Finland

## Seven statements of EMCAPP

1. EMCAPP is based on the faith that there is a God who is actively maintaining this world, so when we talk about Man we should also talk 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 appreciates the cultural and linguistic diversity of backgrounds of its members.

5. EMCAPP wants its members to learn recognizing each other as friends, brothers and sisters.

6. EMCAPP encourages its members in their national challenges and responsibilities.

7. EMCAPP has a global future and it is open to discourse and joined research opportunities round the world (World Movement).

For more detailed version of statements: see [www.emcapp.eu](http://www.emcapp.eu).