

EDIFICATION

THE TRANSDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL
OF CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

Volume 6 • Issue 2 • 2012

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THE TRANSDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

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Edification Journal, 2012, Volume 6, Issue 2

Edification Journal is published by the American Association of Christian Counselors.



SCP Director: Eric Johnson
Graphic Designer: Brandon Smith
President: Tim Clinton

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THE TRANSDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

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Patristic Embroidery on a Cognitive Pattern and Other Uses of the Fathers' Yarn: Introducing the Evidence of Early Christian Texts into Therapeutic Practice

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When relevant teachings drawn from patristic literature are brought into contact with the empirical observations, theoretical presuppositions, and practical techniques of cognitive therapy, the therapeutic enterprise is deepened and expanded in exciting ways from both a theoretical and practical standpoint. One way to observe how patristic writings can enliven and embellish the cognitive therapeutic enterprise is to consider how the assumptions of patristic thought interface with those of cognitive theory. Aaron Beck lists ten formal axioms that are indispensable for a complete description of the theoretical system that is presupposed by cognitive therapy.

Fine embroidery is both art and craft. Before the elegant cross-stitches of a nimble hand begin, the artistic eye has already envisioned an opalescent brocade and selected the silken threads. Most therapists would also agree that their own vocation involves both art and craft, although the choices of color, texture, and design are usually limited to strands manufactured for the carefully prepared protocols of empirically supported treatments. Evidence-driven procedures have even become synonymous with responsible therapy in contemporary society for reasons that stretch from moral considerations to the exigencies of economic resources. Although the confined artist may well cringe, the ever-practical technician will reason that such an approach makes eminent sense, both logically and culturally.

After all, evidence-based treatment in therapy is woven from the two remaining spindles that still have serviceable thread for modernity's loom. Devastating historical vagaries may have undone faith in Enlightenment aspirations. Relentless assaults of postmodern critiques may have left no philosophical system intact. Nevertheless, the *scientific method* remains the *sine qua non* of 21st century medical practice. Moreover, pragmatism continues to define the American psyche and serve as a source of American hope. Such a warp and weft can still produce at least one fabric without a cultural or philosophical rent and that cloth is evidence-based practice. It is no wonder that therapy with the empirical support of randomized controlled trials is hailed as the most mature response to the needs of those struggling with psychological problems. This uniquely modern fabric contributes to the popularity and success of a vast array of treatment protocols, including not only the quintessentially evidence-based implementation

of pharmacotherapy in neuropsychiatry, but also a number of talking therapeutic modalities such as cognitive therapy.

Like everyone else, Christians accept an evidence-based outlook on life, but they would expand the range of admissible data beyond the putatively causal paradigms of utilitarian science to include the existentially meaningful evidence of revelation in the forms of the Old and New Testaments, as well as their own experiences of God. Only a naïve positivist would reject such evidence out of hand, for although the sources of religious belief and spiritual experiences are not subject to scientific verification, the positive behavioral and cognitive consequences of embracing faith are observable events across varied populations, not easily dismissible as essentially meaningless flights of the imagination. Conversions are real, life-changing moments that lead to quantum changes, as the beautiful anthology of case studies by Miller and deBaca (2001) eloquently demonstrates.

Within this context of the scientific method, pragmatism, and faith, Christian therapists have responsibly tailored a variety of therapies to include biblical principles, practices, and readings. For example, in Christian cognitive therapy, some therapists instruct their clients to make use of coping cards with appropriate scriptural verses that counter common cognitive distortions and to use biblical passages together with imaging techniques to reframe and even restructure traumatic memories (McMinn & Campbell, 2007; Eng, 1998). The outcomes for these modified therapies have been encouragingly positive and empowered entire populations of troubled individuals to seek treatment without the fear of compromising their spiritual yearnings, moral values, or religious beliefs (Hodge, 2006).

I believe that there is much promise in further

expanding the circle of faith-based evidence by exploring the voluminous patristic corpus, that treasury of profound reflections by Greek, Latin, and Syriac spiritual masters on the rich calico cloth of the Christian life. To put these contributions into perspective, recall that therapists can speak with greater authority as their hours of clinical experience increase. In a lifetime, a practitioner can theoretically accrue as many as 55,000 hours of clinical experience in a 30-year practice. Now consider the material that can be gained from tapping into a tradition spanning over a thousand years with lifetime investigations into the workings of the human soul and the practical wisdom inherent in Scripture by those engaged in existential, qualitative research in the uniquely Christian laboratories of religious communities, monastic cells, and the Christian confessional. The amount of guidance available here at both a theoretical and practical level is enormous. These investigations and naturalistic observations by ancient Christian strugglers can not only deepen secular approaches with spiritual depth and a clear sense of moral direction in seamless continuity with Holy Scripture, but they can also provide additional vocabulary, alternate hermeneutical frameworks, and supplementary techniques forged in the crucible of a highly sophisticated pagan culture.

Many centuries before Christian psychologists had the task of evaluating and utilizing studies on behavior and cognition, faithful followers of Christ, who were distinguished for their deep humility, inspired wisdom, and experience of Christ's glory, carefully weighed and prudently made use of compatible elements from the most powerful philosophical systems of the ancient world. They did so fearlessly by virtue of their profound faith in the power of God the Word [*Logos*] to transfigure all of creation, including the inspired creations of the human mind, as well as their awareness of His presence [*logos*] in whatsoever things are just and true (Phil 4:8, KJV). These figures, who made the Gospel of Christ the law of their existence and thereby came to live "the glorious freedom of the children of God," came to be known historically as the Church Fathers, for like Saint Paul before them, they also traveled with paternal love "until Christ was formed in the hearts" of those who turned to them for counsel (Gal 4:19, KJV).

In providing guidance about the wisdom of classical antiquity, the Fathers naturally rejected speculations about the gods, but approached certain pre-Christian philosophical observations about life and the human condition with a discerning openness. This is true even for certain presuppositions at the heart of the classical Greek philosophical enterprise: the most important of which is the conviction that, regardless of the emphasis given by specific schools, *theoria* and *praxis* are interwoven elements of a single reality. For ancient Greeks and Church Fathers alike, tearing speculation of the mind away from the activities of life rends the very fabric of philosophy,

technology, and science (Matsoukas, 2001). Two thousand years of patristic commentary on this unity make it clear that the interlocking strands of *theoria* and *praxis* are essential for the believer to knit together the wedding garment of a flourishing Christian life.

Significantly, the semantic areas of the ancient philosophical dyad *theoria-praxis* overlap in interesting ways with what modern psychologists refer to as cognition and behavior. The chief theorists of cognitive-behavioral and rational-emotive therapies have pointed out this common ground by stressing the theoretical importance of the following classic expression of stoic philosophy taken from Epictetus's *Encheiridion*: "It is not things themselves that disturb people, but their judgments about these things." Quite significantly the Greek text for *The Encheiridion* is found not only in volume 218 of the *Loeb Classical Library* (1912-1989), but also with some minor textual alterations in *tomus* 79 of J. P. Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* (1857-1866), the volume that houses the genuine and spurious works of Saint Nilus the Ascetic. This is but a small, yet highly suggestive, indication that cognition's influence on emotion and behavior has been a common object of reflection not only for the ancient Stoics and modern cognitive theorists, but also for many Church Fathers who attempted to approach such subjects with the mind of Christ.¹

When relevant teachings drawn from patristic literature are brought into contact with the empirical observations, theoretical presuppositions, and practical techniques of cognitive therapy, those elements of the therapeutic enterprise are deepened and expanded in exciting ways from both a theoretical and practical standpoint. One way to observe how patristic writings can enliven and embellish the cognitive therapeutic enterprise is to consider how the assumptions of patristic thought interface with those of cognitive theory. In Brad Alford and Aaron Beck's (1997) work dedicated to integration with other modalities, they list ten formal axioms that are indispensable for a complete description of the theoretical system that is presupposed by cognitive therapy. While it would be worthwhile to consider how patristic texts relate to each axiom separately, even a thought experiment involving patristic embroidery on the sparse pattern of a single axiom, such as axiom nine, will suffice to demonstrate the theoretical and practical value of exploring early Christian writings.

Some Patristic Embroidery on Axiom 9 of the Formal Theory of Cognitive Therapy

Axiom 9: "There are three levels of cognition: (a) the preconscious, unintentional level ('automatic thoughts'); (b) the conscious level; and (c) the metacognitive level, which includes 'realistic' or 'rational' (adaptive) responses. These serve useful functions, but the conscious levels are of primary interest

for clinical improvement in psychotherapy” (Alford & Beck, 1997, p. 17).

Whereas both cognitive theorists and Church Fathers could subscribe to Aristotle’s classic definition of axioms as statements worthy of acceptance and necessary prior to inquiry,² they necessarily understand axiomatic assertions differently at an existential level. In keeping with Popper’s (2002) philosophy of science, cognitive theorists make no claim about the truth-value of their axioms or their use beyond the bounds of the theoretical system (Alford & Beck, 1997). In harmony with their experience of Christ as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (Jn 14:6, KJV), ancient Christian strugglers view axioms as revealed truths that bear witness to the Gospel of Christ. For this reason in patristic texts, scriptural verses are sometimes referred to as axioms for Christian teachings and the spiritual life.³ Thus at the very outset, we can see that cognitive theory and the principles framing the Christian way of life exist on quite distinct planes with respect to the truth: that of benign indifference and fervent devotion. Hence, wherever the yarn of patristic texts can be stitched through the pattern of cognitive theory, interventions based on those points of intersection will certainly seem more spiritually cogent and have greater persuasive power when used with Christian populations.

“There are three levels of cognition: (a) the preconscious, unintentional level (‘automatic thoughts’)...”

The notion of preconscious mental processes, made famous by Freud and now observed by neuroscience in a non-psychodynamic framework, is at the very least considered to be a modern discovery. As point of fact, monastic masters as early as the 7th century were aware of “flicks of the mind” that were “sometimes even unknown to the person himself.”⁴ Ecclesiastical writers from across the ages and from a wide range of cultures have been aware that these *pre-conscious* processes can influence both behavior and emotion. For example, an early nineteenth century Russian saint, Theophan the Recluse, notes that there are subtle thoughts that “go unnoticed at the hour of their appearance in the heart, and are revealed only later by action” (Theophan, 1908, p. 285), or as the second century Carthaginian, ecclesiastical writer, Tertullian, observes, by the expression on a person’s face.⁵

The Fathers were also aware that many thoughts are generated unintentionally. In the East, Saint Nilus the Ascetic (†c. 430) considered it to be natural for the mind to “never cease to beget thoughts”⁶ irrespective of a person’s intention, while in the West, Saint John Cassian (360–435) noted that the mind “is never idle, but continuously in motion and musing on many things.”⁷ Many thoughts are so unintentional that Saint John of Damascus (676–749) calls them “ungovernable energies of the mind,”⁸ an almost prescient comment, given our

present theories about the electrochemical substrate to all mental processes, of which the vast majority are not under the governing, rational control of the prefrontal cortex.

Today, we know that pre-conscious, unintentional mental processes encompass a vast sprawling jungle of inter-related pathways. Along the outskirts of that jungle, cognitive therapists have discovered a certain species of cognition called automatic thoughts, which have an important subliminal influence on emotional and behavioral reactions. Automatic thoughts are defined as brief bursts of thought by the self and to the self that are intended to convey information by evaluating or monitoring the self’s present situation, as well as by providing warnings and instructions when necessary (Beck, Freeman, & Davis, 2007).

At the very least, the Fathers display a tacit knowledge of these kinds of cognition that Saint Maximus the Confessor (580–662) describes as “movements of the rational part of the soul without speaking aloud.”⁹ Such thoughts seem to appear “without the passage of time, without word or image...by a simple remembrance, which is instantaneous, independent, inapprehensible.”¹⁰ At other times, these thoughts rise to the surface of consciousness in the form of what Saint Augustine (354–430) called “speeches of the heart” that are “acts of sight” recounted by “the mouth of the heart.”¹¹ In *Civitate Dei* (7.14 PL 41.205), he compares speech to Hermes running back and forth between interlocutors or negotiating between merchants. If we weave these passages and concepts into a patristic *Gestalt*, we can make out a rather apt Christian portrayal of automatic thoughts, thoughts which in the words of Saint Gregory of Sinai (1260–1346) are “mental images” that are motives for action.¹²

“There are three levels of cognition...(b) the conscious level...”

For Saint Gregory of Nyssa (335–394), the conscious level can be understood best by contrasting it with the state of sleep. He notes that when “people are awake and busy, the mind is in control and informed by the senses.”¹³ In other words, consciousness can be construed as a function of purposeful awareness, perception, and activity. The Fathers also note that consciousness is always relative. According to Saint Hilary of Poitiers (300–368), “consciousness of self is colored by its circumstances,”¹⁴ suggesting the pivotal role of an individual’s physical, social, and emotional environment in self-awareness. Even when we are awake, Saint John Chrysostom (349–407) reminds us that we are oblivious to most of the things that we do, and often need others to direct and focus our attention to aspects of our conduct that would remain otherwise hidden from us.¹⁵ When speaking of the conscious level or state of awareness, early Christian writers usually employ metaphors for sight or light, once more indicating that consciousness is a function of both focus and external conditions. For

example, in order to be conscious of how serious a sin is, it is necessary on the one hand, to “perceive it,” “examine it,”¹⁶ and “look intently at it,”¹⁷ and on the other hand, to be exposed to the light of examples from the opposite virtues.¹⁸ Thus, to use Saint John Chrysostom’s analogy, in a darkened room someone may be conscious of something hanging down and believe it to be a snake, but when the room is lit, perception changes and the individual realizes that it is only a rope.¹⁹ For the Fathers, increasing the clarity and range of the conscious level is critical, because “the roots and causes of our offenses lie not in others,” notes Saint John Cassian, “but in ourselves,”²⁰ which means that consciousness as well as awareness of thoughts and behavior through consistent introspection are prerequisites for spiritual healing.

“There are three levels of cognition... (c) the metacognitive level, which includes ‘realistic’ or ‘rational’ (adaptive responses)...”

Metacognition refers to conscious thought of a higher order apparently involving the prefrontal cortex that can deliberately control and override more instinctual, pre-programmed automatic responses of the limbic system.²¹ At this level of thought, people examine and evaluate their personal theories and hypotheses about themselves, others, and their world, thereby regulating their core schemata, assumptions, and rules for engaging with their environment (Alford & Beck, 1997).

This level corresponds to what ancient Christian writers refer to as reason (including rational approaches to problems) or prudence (involving realistic and adaptive responses to situations). Saint Maximus the Confessor notes the universal need to cultivate such an order of thought to regulate behavior in the manifold interactions of daily life when he writes, “Everyone should be taught to live and govern himself according to reason [*logos*] alone.”²² It is significant that the Saint refers to this level of thought as a skill that can be learned and perfected. He further defines prudence as becoming aware of a thought and cross-examining it [*basaniasa*: lit., torturing it] in order for it to be situated within a wider and more comprehensive framework.²³ Cross-examining a thought in patristic tradition, like metacognitive enhancement in cognitive therapy, is a matter of constraining oneself to ask questions that may not mesh well with the overall framework in which a given thought is entangled. With respect to self-pity, Saint Barsanuphius (†c. 563) once wrote, “It is amazing how the human mind gets cloaked... not letting the person ask himself, why are you troubled? Why are you troubled, my soul, hope in the Lord” (Barsanuphius & John, 1997, no. 692, pp. 306–308). Obviously, it is more adaptive to seek out the cause for an emotional disturbance and take into account the presence of the Lord for Whom all things are possible, than to simply remain in that

dysfunctional state.

A modern Orthodox monastic father, Elder Paisios (1924–1994), once advised a nun about a simple and practical way to start the metacognitive process: “Is everything really the way it appears to you? Always put a question mark after every thought, since you usually look at things with a negative slant... If you put two question marks it is better. If you put three, it is better still” (Elder Paisios the Hagiorite, 2001, p. 62). This coincides perfectly with the first lessons in therapeutic metacognition: namely, the realization that automatic thoughts are not absolute truths and that questioning them is an important way to undermine and weaken the influence of maladaptive cognition (Beck, Emery, & Greenberg, 1985).

Portrayed on the elaborate tapestry of patristic literature are some choice illustrations of metacognitive reflection. For instance, Christians, aware of the Gospel injunction—“that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mt 5:28, KJV)—are understandably concerned about purity and faithfulness in marriage. How are they to cope with carnal desires aroused after gazing upon an attractive person? Saint Neilus the Ascetic suggests that the tempted individual make use of “the short period of time available for careful reflection, so that he can examine and discern what is harmful and what is beneficial as well as how sorrowful he will feel after engaging in illicit pleasure and how much satisfaction and joy he will have when good thoughts blossom forth.”²⁴

Although such an example might be difficult to locate in cognitive therapy manuals for clinicians, the technique of weighing the hypothetical advantages and disadvantages of choices one can make is now considered a standard tool in the therapist’s metacognitive repertoire. Saint Maximus the Confessor suggests that believers should pay close attention to any improper thoughts in order to recognize and eliminate their causes.²⁵ This requires not only self-control, but also careful deliberation (metacognition) about how to rectify them²⁶ by detecting the premonitory signs that make certain thoughts seem attractive and comparing them with the ultimate results that are often repulsive.²⁷ In the works of Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), the sophistication of this approach is striking. He notes that the faithful can gain much benefit by learning where they first had a bad thought, how they became aware of it, with whom they were interacting, and under what conditions.²⁸ In other words, he suggests an examination of the behavioral, situational, and environmental antecedents that contribute to the persistence and appearance of a malignant thought. Once those factors are identified, maladaptive behavioral patterns or counterproductive aspects of the environment can be modified for the sake of spiritual healing.

“These serve useful functions...”

The conscious and metacognitive levels serve useful functions that are so obvious as to need no further commentary. Their utility will be explored in our examination of the final clause in axiom nine. The contributions of the preconscious level are somewhat ambiguous, since that is the level, which under normal conditions can alert an individual to real or potential dangers, but in psychopathology can drive maladaptive approaches to situations. According to cognitive theory, the automatic level serves the useful function of enabling people to quickly reach a conclusion about a situation on the basis of developmental and primitive schemata that filter information through two broadly adaptive prime directives that motivate them to gravitate towards safety and pleasure, but to avoid danger and pain (Beck, 1976). Whether this aspect of the preconscious level is beneficial or harmful depends on the fit between underlying schemata activated by a given situation thereby setting in motion automatic thoughts, emotional reactions, and behavioral responses on the one hand, and the situation itself that might realistically call for other strategies for optimal coping and adaptation on the other. In other words, if the script works in most situations, this level serves a useful function; however, if it is usually inappropriate, it can sabotage a person's ultimate best interests.

Patristic reflections tacitly reach similar conclusions about this level based on observations about the Christian life. Of course, the Fathers do not refer directly to underlying schemata producing predictable automatic thoughts, but they do speak at length about passions provoking bad thoughts and about virtues giving rise to good ones. Passions and virtues can be viewed in terms of cognitive theory as maladaptive and adaptive schemata in reference to a person's journey towards Christ. In order to appreciate the correlation between passions and schemata that operate at a preconscious level, it is useful to examine some of the similarities between these two concepts.

In patristic texts, the term *passion* has a number of definitions and connotations. Representative of a long-standing tradition, Saint John Chrysostom not only refers to passions as the offspring of an imperfect mind and childish judgment,²⁹ but also compares them to the behavioral responses observed in various wild beasts.³⁰ This description coincides extremely well with the understanding of schemata as reflecting the global, absolutist, and invariant thinking processes of children (Beck et al., 1979), as well as the non-volitional reactions of animals (Beck et al., 1985). Saint Dorotheus of Gaza (505–565) defines the word *passion* as “a bad disposition of our inner man,”³¹ whereas Saint Gregory Palamas (1269–1359) describes passions as “paths that are always crooked and perverse.”³² Finally, Saint Maximus the Confessor notes that a passion always consists of an interaction involving a perceptible object, the senses,

and the faculties for reasoning, desire, or aggression.³³ In this interaction, the passion manifests itself when the senses become aware of a perceptible object that incites it, but remains hidden or dormant when that object is absent.³⁴ Stitching these diverse strands into a single psychological pattern, passions can be understood as situation-specific discrete mental states that when activated, orient (or actually, *disorient*) a person in an emotionally charged fashion, motivating that individual to engage in specific behaviors that bear the marks of sin. The overlap with the notion of a maladaptive schema is striking, but do these ancient Christian writers also consider a potentially useful function of this preconscious level as referred to in axiom nine? Indeed, they do.

With one voice, the Fathers maintain that the only way to be no longer at the mercy of the automatic promptings of the passions is for each passion to be replaced by its corresponding virtue.³⁵ Countless patristic passages can be cited to demonstrate that passions and virtues can be understood as diametrically opposing structures that guide human cognition and behavior.³⁶ When early Christian writers speak of virtue killing the passions, they are pointing to the concerted effort required³⁷ for passions to be disentangled from the taut lattice of habitual responses and replaced by virtues (Matsoukas, 2004).³⁸ When this takes place, virtues in fact serve the same function as the passions, but now in a godly manner, for virtues become “the very principles or criteria man uses for making decisions” (Keselopoulos, 2004, p. 136). Thus, when virtue is present, the promptings at the preconscious level do in fact serve a useful function, just as do many schemata in adaptive behavior. Even further, knowledge of the virtues as an ideal pattern for orienting human behavior and decisions uncover the missing aim in the haphazard stitching of the passions. For instance, G. K. Chesterton once commented, “Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God” (Cusick, 2012, p. 15) which means that even the passionate pursuit of empty pleasure can be understood as a misguided expression of the virtuous search for the ultimate desire of the human heart.

“The conscious levels are of primary interest for clinical improvement in psychotherapy.”

To unpack this phrase, positive therapeutic change in cognitive therapy is mediated through patients being consciously instructed in concrete methods for increasing their awareness of their thoughts about their situation, for shifting their focus to alternative interpretations thereof, and for enhancing their evaluation of transient thoughts and more deeply ingrained beliefs about the self, others, and their personal worlds. In practical terms, therapy involves the judicious use of behavioral, cognitive, and metacognitive techniques selected on the basis of the cognitive conceptualization of the patient and his or her disorder.

Ever faithful to the basic proclamation of the Gospel, therapy in a patristic framework means repentance. As Saint John Chrysostom puts it concisely, “sin is the wound, repentance [*metanoia*] is the remedy.”³⁹ The Church Fathers have long pointed out that the word *metanoia* means specific changes in one’s way of thinking in which the focus of the *nous*, that is, the governing seat of the mind, is “transferred from that which is bad to that which is good.”⁴⁰ Consequently, the believer’s entire way of engaging with the world shifts from the unnatural condition of subjection to sin to the natural state of progression towards God.⁴¹ Obviously, healing through repentance involves the conscious levels that are activated by decisions involving both thought processes and concrete actions. Saint Asterius of Amaseia (350–410) notes that repentance is composed of both behavioral and cognitive components that undo what has been committed by improper conduct [*praxis*] or has been thought in line with a spiritually unhealthy frame of mind [*diathesis*].⁴² For the Fathers, repentance is the solution to vice (repeated bad behavior)⁴³ and a physician for the passions (engrained spiritually unhealthy schemata).⁴⁴ Someone begins to repent by paying close attention to the self and the state of the soul. This knowledge is then used to discern that person’s unique journey of repentance understood in terms of its suitability to his or her condition.⁴⁵ Thus, as in the case of cognitive therapy, so also in patristic tradition, introspection, intertwined with increased awareness to cognition and behavior, is employed to conceptualize both the individual’s condition and unique path to recovery.

What concrete methods, then, do the Church Fathers employ in order to engage the conscious levels in a way leading to that improvement in thought, word, and deed that make up the virtuous life in Christ, the aim of repentance? The patristic answer is Christian asceticism understood in its broadest possible sense, which includes inner prayer, watchfulness over the thoughts, and guidance from a spiritual father. It should be pointed out that the word *asceticism* [*askisis*] has a much wider range of meaning in Classical and Byzantine Greek than the technical usage of its English cognate. In classical times, it referred to the practice of any art or trade, physical exercises, and a way of life.⁴⁶ In the Christian era, it was expanded to also include the study of scripture, the life of virtue and piety, exercises and training, restraint and moderation, and finally the monastic life and practices as well as the other meanings conveyed by the connotatively poorer English word *asceticism*.⁴⁷ Hence, asceticism is far more sophisticated and extensive than caricatures about disheveled eccentrics given to fasting, wearing sackcloth, and being unconcerned with daily hygiene. An examination of the elements of Christian asceticism, in fact, reveals that it makes use of many of the same therapeutic pathways associated with behavioral and cognitive techniques for clinical

improvement, although the over-arching goals differ considerably.

As in the case of cognitive behavioral therapy, so in patristic treatments, the initial interventions for therapeutic change involve specific behavioral modifications selected for the effect those modifications will have on cognition (Beck, 1988),⁴⁸ for as Saint Dorotheus of Gaza notes, “the soul is affected by what the body does.”⁴⁹ Thus, monastic masters advise the use of physical exercise (manual labor) and more neurally complex tasks involving eye-hand coordination (handicrafts) as a means to find relief from both intrusive thoughts and the boredom⁵⁰ that sets the stage for depression or impulsivity. Given the amount of sensory integration throughout the expansive human visual cortex and the vast regions of the motor cortex devoted to the hands (as demonstrated by any diagram of the homunculus), the fathers’ suggestion of handiwork as a solution to boredom is astute from a neuroanatomical point of view. Even with more cognitively focused tasks such as learning how to pray, the Fathers first speak about the value of attention to behavioral elements suggesting that novices adopt the posture and stance of those who pray with piety, since “in the case of the imperfect, the mind often conforms to the body.”⁵¹

Early Christian writers also emphasize the psychologically well-established fact that a person’s state of mind and thoughts are colored by the surrounding environment.⁵² Thus, they recommend church attendance not only for the “passive” influence of being in a setting conducive to beneficial thoughts, but also with the awareness that actively engaging in that environment can have a powerful impact, one that Saint John Chrysostom likens to the drills of a soldier preparing for battle.⁵³ In general, the Fathers suggest both observing the virtuous behavior of others for the purpose of learning useful strategies for interpersonal interactions⁵⁴ and noticing the successful attempts of others to overcome vice in order to maintain motivation in efforts to change.⁵⁵

Alongside these primarily behavioral interventions aimed at cognitive change, the Church Fathers also provide counsel for the believer’s thought life, beginning with surface thoughts that do not lead to the ultimate goal of sanctification. In terms of dealing with unwanted or unprofitable thoughts, the first advice is prayer, especially *monologistic* prayer that can be defined by the presence of a singular powerful thought that can fill the entire horizon of consciousness like the blazing sun. The prime example of this kind of prayer is the soul’s cry for Christ’s mercy as expressed in the prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.”⁵⁶ This conscious shift in attention by focusing on the words and shift in affect by bringing the soul into the presence of her Savior, her monologistic hope,⁵⁷ radically alters the mental environment in which the unwanted cognition appears and thereby brings clarity of mind.⁵⁸

Other conscious methods for dealing with thoughts include vocalizing them to someone else,⁵⁹

exposing them by writing them down,⁶⁰ disdaining them,⁶¹ and engaging in other intellectual activities such as the memorization of Bible verses⁶² or language learning.⁶³ The individual can also alter his approach to the thoughts by contrasting them with reason,⁶⁴ or the Gospel of Christ,⁶⁵ by analyzing them introspectively distinguishing between their logical meaning and subjective emotional connotations,⁶⁶ or by observing the external situational factors that can contribute to the persistence of problematic thoughts.⁶⁷ These qualitatively different methods can also be quantified for the sake of accuracy, for as Saint Augustine noticed, “the science of number...is quite valuable for the careful interpreter.”⁶⁸ For example, Saint Nilus the Ascetic refers to the case of a monk who desired to determine the ratio of good thoughts to bad remembrances on a daily basis and who would put a pebble on his right side for every good thought and on his left side for every bad one. At the close of the day, he would have an empirical, numerical tally to measure his progress.⁶⁹

Finally, the Fathers adopt additional interventions to get at the root of cognitive difficulties faced by believers. Saint Nilus the Ascetic observes on more than one occasion that “more frequent remembrances more deeply carve the outline [of those remembrances] in the soul for bad⁷⁰ and for good.⁷¹ This comment is a patristic way of noting the importance of cognitive repetition and mental images in the formation of easily activated neural circuits that predictably lead to emotional and behavioral outcomes that are negative or positive depending on the thought’s content.

In patristic counsel, this remarkably modern observation about what neuroscientists call brain plasticity, leads to equally contemporary methods for consciously modifying schemata. For example, consistently reading appropriate spiritual books is a purpose-laden and practical exercise that can broaden the believer’s mental horizon to include spiritual realities as well as to provide additional choices for coping strategies for the sake of leading a virtuous life.⁷² Ancient *lectio divina* and modern bibliotherapy at a psychological level have much in common. The Fathers also made use of lavishly visual images in order to increase motivation for engaging in soul-benefitting activities or for avoiding spiritually harmful reactions to situations. For example, the seeming tediousness of prayer is re-clothed with prophetic imagery of the vigorous battle of spiritual warriors who resemble the many-eyed seraphim,⁷³ whereas angry reactions of an insulted individual are compared to vomiting in public.⁷⁴ Finally, Saint Augustine was well aware that when someone enters “the roomy chambers of memory where the treasures of countless images are stored,”⁷⁵ new memories can be formed,⁷⁶ especially given the realization that some memories may be out of focus because at the time the will was concerned with other objectives.⁷⁷ In his reflections on writing his *Confessions*, he even noted how the process of writing down his life

history increased his fervor at the level of thought and feeling,⁷⁸ which is also an implicit affirmation of journaling and historical tests of schema used in contemporary therapeutic practice.

The Aesthetic Value of Embroidery and Other Uses for Patristic Yarn

The above patristic *Gedankenexperiment* indicates that it is indeed possible to pass the golden threads of the fathers’ writings back and forth through the pattern provided by a major axiom underlying cognitive therapy, thereby clothing a theoretical, psychological proposition with the spiritual beauty of Christian wisdom. This possibility also has some important practical implications for Christian therapists striving to employ their clinical expertise in evidence-based practice requiring sensitivity to patient characteristics, culture, and preferences (APA, 2006). In particular, committed Christians seeking help with psychological difficulties may have concerns about the process of therapy having a deleterious effect on their spiritual lives or vitiating their religious commitments. Our axiomatic embroidery with patristic texts can provide such patients with reassurance that an encouraging degree of harmonization of cognitive theory with a classical Christian worldview is indeed possible. A detailed knowledge of how psychological theory interfaces with patristic texts can also offer therapists with the alternative of recasting potentially off-putting cognitive terminology with the rich, human expressions of ancient Christian strugglers.⁷⁹ For example, terms charged with evolutionary connotations that trouble some Christians can be translated into the more familiar, religious language of virtue and vice.

In addition to those conceptual gains with apparent clinical utility, by referring to the advice or explanations of heroic Christian figures, the individual’s quest for psychological health is placed in the context of other Christian strugglers and their successful approaches to similar problems seen from the vantage point of the Gospel and the flourishing life in Christ. This recontextualization can increase the efficacy of therapeutic interventions, both making the assigned tasks spiritually meaningful and infusing the individual with Christian hope that can soar far above the realistic hope that cognitive therapy customarily proffers.

Turning to patristic sources can also help resolve a certain ambiguity that complicates the Christian psychologist’s attempts to help others. Although the Christian’s faith should have ultimate significance for the meaning of every believer’s life and death, the concrete particularity of evidence-based theories and techniques sometimes becomes an overriding paradigm that all but eclipses the light of faith. Looking to the texts of ancient Christian strugglers creates new openings for the sunshine of faith to pour into the therapist’s work and to illumine the sufferer in need of direction. Use of these texts in

no way undermines the need for Bible study and the development of biblical practices, for patristic writings offer a rich, pre-sectarian commentary on Holy Scripture that reinforces biblical principles and indicates how they can be applied in the Christian life. Turning to such works in therapy can also provide a wider Christian theoretical framework for the contemporary practice of psychological eclecticism in therapeutic interventions. In fact, the incorporation of biblical and patristic texts into the therapeutic process can bring a new openness to that most precious part of human existence that has become so elusive in our fragmented, postmodern world. In other words, they can open our eyes to the unifying presence and providence of God that the Fathers discerned with such ease.

Many writers have decried the dehumanizing effects of technology that employs measurement and categorization in order to manipulate reality for utilitarian ends. Martin Heidegger (1977), in his famous essay, "The Question Concerning Technology," seems to argue that the way out of this cul-de-sac is to return to an approach to the world epitomized by the ancient Greek root of our word for technology: *techne*, a word that meant both art and technique. *Techne* held in the same family both the utilitarian and the aesthetic, thus including the instrumentality of a cobbler making shoes to be worn and the art of the sculptor making a statue to be admired. In short, the German phenomenologist argues that having lost the artist or poet in our technological endeavors and approach to the world, we need to restore our artistic and poetic vision to preserve our own humanity.

The Fathers, like the ancient Greeks before them, also viewed *techne* as both art and craft. They marveled at the *techne* of God,⁸⁰ but among the many forms of *techne*, they would also include the art or craft of showing mercy and kindness that sculpts the very soul.⁸¹ By bringing early Christian writings into the cognitive therapeutic enterprise, the psychologist is opening up another heretofore-concealed spiritual horizon, which has ample room for practical interventions, but never loses sight of the greatest masterpiece of creation, the human being in the image and likeness of God. In this space, utilitarian quantification, conceptualization, and behavioral/cognitive techniques can be balanced by words open to a world vibrant with the presence of the grace of God Who works wonders. In this context, therapy can become not only a powerful empirical, technical craft, but also an art that is open to the intervention and direction of the Artist who "alone knowest the hearts of the children of men" (1 Kg 8:39, KJV) and can shape them as clay in a potter's hand (Is 64:8, KJV).

Although our own embroidery on axiom nine may have knit together cognitive principles and patristic texts, such an exercise hardly constitutes a unified art and craft. Admittedly, our thought experiment has been unashamedly utilitarian in

the sense of marshaling early Christian texts for the technological end of psychological improvement in the framework of cognitive therapy. We have extracted quotations and concepts from larger passages *for the sake* of demonstrating the existence of congruency. It is pointless to try to escape from utility as though aimlessness were a good in itself; however, being simultaneously open to other horizons is a valuable stance, both spiritually in terms of seeing one's neighbor and psychologically in terms of increasing adaptive choices. Each point where our patristic thread passes through our cognitive pattern simultaneously opens a door to the possibility of a life-changing encounter with the God of our fathers. Reading more extensive extracts from carefully selected patristic texts may have additional benefits beyond proof-texting cognitive theory. A longer passage that contains a meaningful insight into a patient's recovery can be given as an assignment for the patient to wrestle with and in the spirit of "seek and ye shall find" (Mt 7:7, KJV), to discover that "word," which will show him or her new ways of coping or framing the past, present, and future.

For example, many patients suffering with depression have to deal with situations that even the most realistic, objective appraisals would assess as discouragingly adverse. In such cases, cognitive therapists usually empathize with the patient, explore the idiosyncratic meaning of the patient's circumstances, and finally help the patient both adjust to the situation and accept it (Moorey, 1996). When Christian psychologists are working with Christian patients in such straits, therapists can avail themselves of the diverse patristic collections of epistles, which include letters written for precisely such a state of affairs. For instance, while Saint John Chrysostom was undergoing the hardships of an unjust, forced exile and daily mistreatment, he also wrote letters to the Deaconess Olympia in order to console her, encourage her, and alter her way of looking at, and hence responding to, her situation. His first letter to her could be given to a depressed patient dealing with adverse life situations in order to facilitate the process of adjustment and acceptance. Although I would urge Christian therapists to read this epistolary masterpiece on their own, even a brief survey of its contents should illustrate its potential therapeutic value.⁸²

The Saint begins his letter to Olympia, even as a good therapist would approach a patient, with total empathy for her emotional state. However, he not only acknowledges, and even validates, her perspective and interpretation of her situation, but also provides her with additional visual metaphors that capture the absolutist, negative bias that characterizes those suffering from depression. Thus, he weaves images of "a fierce black storm" and "the darkness of a moonless night" (PG 52.549). He directs her mind's eye to the arresting imagery of ship captains "clasping their knees with their hands instead of grasping the rudder, bewailing the hopelessness of their situation"

(PG 52.549) as they watch their ships being wrecked on a roaring sea.

And then, when even the fringes of his melancholy tapestry have been brocaded with other equally evocative, tragic details, the Saint suddenly discards his narrative handiwork and makes the surprising remark that the present circumstances are even far worse. Having taken the despondent Olympia to the very limits of her distress and pointing beyond that which speech can convey, but which the heart can still deeply feel, at the psychologically most critical moment, he discerns light on the horizon. And employing gentle confrontation, he writes, “Nevertheless, even when I look at these calamities, I do not abandon the hope of better things, for I consider who is the Pilot in all of this—not someone who can beat the storm by seamanship, but who calms the raging waters by His nod” (PG 52.549). Without minimizing her situation, he begins the process of metacognitive re-evaluation by having her consider additional factors and perspectives. First, he turns her gaze away from the storm and towards Christ Who works wonders and trains us in patience. Second, he suggests a radical change in focus and perception, adding: “So do not be downcast, for there is only one thing, Olympia, which is really terrible; only one trial which is real. And that is sin” (PG 52.549). Elaborating on this perspective, he reminds her of the contrast between “temporal things, which pass away like the stream of a river” (PG 52.550) and the soul, which is immortal.

Having loosened, however slightly, the grip of depressed thinking, the Saint again returns to empathizing with Olympia and her difficulties, but now from another angle. He recognizes how painful it is to endure such adversities and how frustrating it is to discover that seeking help from others is like “running after shadows” (PG 52.550). At this point, he moves from a cognitive suggestion to a behavioral one, advising her not simply to look toward the Good Pilot, but to actually “call upon Jesus” (PG 52.550). In order to provide her with a role model for responding to her hopeless situation, he relates the tale of the three youths in the fiery furnace. At first, he emphasizes the horrifying, external aspects of the situation beyond their control; then he turns to their inner acceptance and composure within their power; and finally he suggests that like them, she “continue to give God thanks for all things,” “praising and calling upon Him” forever (PG 52.551).

Having fully empathized with her plight, having given her an alternative focus, having provided her with further coping mechanisms, and having pointed out successful models for emulation, he at last begins the most important part of this truly therapeutic epistle. He teaches her how to accept that “the web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together,”⁸³ especially when the unwinding flax of ills never seems to reach an end. In heart-rending detail, the Saint weaves another tapestry portraying the sufferings and trials that besieged Christ and His ministry from the

slaying of the innocents to His Passion on the Cross. He likewise recounts the ordeals that the Apostles went through after the Resurrection. And while the Saint emphasizes all the fear, abandonment, slander, scandal, cruelty and tragedy of those times, Olympia cannot fail to notice that through it all, God’s providence and wisdom were active for the very salvation of the world. Furthermore, since every human mind is continuously making associations and connections, the Saint’s writings guide her thoughts not only to link the trials of God’s chosen vessels with her own trials, but also to begin to suspect that beneath the surface of her seemingly meaningless troubles, God is at work. The Saint closes his letter by counseling Olympia to continue the task of examining “the good things with the painful” (PG 52.555) in Scripture and then to compare her findings with her own situation. In this way, she can not only distract herself from her own sufferings, but also find consolation in learning to accept those unfavorable conditions by trusting in God’s providence and moving forward with faith and hope.

A therapist could assign such a text for a patient to read and be prepared to discuss at the next session. Alternatively, they could read it together, pausing for reflection after each complete section. The patient could even try to visualize the scenes that the Saint describes. Then, they can discuss what each passage means as a text, what it could have meant to Olympia, and most importantly what the letter means to the patient and how the Saint’s advice could be applied in the patient’s life. In the context of pastoral counseling, I have seen what can happen when the appropriate patristic text is given to the right person at the right moment: an epiphany, a release from inner bonds, and a new level of acceptance that allows the soul to make the best of a difficult situation with renewed courage, newly kindled faith, and genuine hope.

In a similar vein, the patient can also be provided with a biography of the ancient Christian author, which in turn will increase the power of that writer’s words. They become the words not only of a friend and fellow traveler, but also of someone who has fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7, KJV). The Church Fathers referred to in the preceding passages led remarkable lives of Christian courage in the face of great adversity. From their example, the struggler can dare to emulate their persistence and resiliency. As already noted, when Saint John Chrysostom was writing that wonderful epistle to console Olympia, the sickly, exiled bishop was actually in even worse straits than she. His ability by the grace of God to write such a letter under these conditions is itself powerful testimony that the vision of faith can overcome the greatest obstacles. Reading such lives and such works, another miracle can take place in the reader’s heart. To use the language of Gadamer (1989), the interpretive horizon of the sufferer begins to fuse with that of the text, meaning

that that the sufferer has moved to a new vista where fresh possibilities for engaging in life come into view.

Of course, to guide a patient to that new vista of recovery, the clinician must have the relevant maps in hand. Selection of those patristic maps can be daunting for a patrologist, let alone a specialist in clinical psychology. Nevertheless, a patristic version of Hutchin and Adler's Great Books Program tailored to the issue of spiritual and psychological health could be developed, in which texts would be arranged according to the theme of emotional disturbances and their antidotes. A host of monastic fathers have already done the groundwork for such a project with a wide variety of thematic collections of sayings as well as anthologies such as *The Evergetinos: A Complete Text* (2008). The quantity and diversity of faith-based evidence that is available for the Christian psychologist is truly vast.

I believe that increasing the richness of the Christian aspect of therapy via patristic study offers promise to the therapist and patient alike. As Christian texts become intertwined with the basic theoretical framework of an evidence-driven therapy such as cognitive therapy, that framework begins to offer a dual hope as cognitive/behavioral interventions are framed in both the technological language of science and the moral and aesthetic language of the practical Christian wisdom of the Church Fathers. Simply the reassurance that the believer's own beliefs are not in jeopardy will lower patient resistance and should improve compliance. Reading specific Christian texts in the context of therapy can potentially serve as an intervention in its own right, an intervention that aims not only at the resolution of a particular psychological difficulty and increased optimism in recovery, but also increased faith in Christ. In the light of faith, both therapist and patient behold the whole person, not just a cluster of symptoms.

With the cords of faith, both art and craft can be knit together for patient and therapist alike. After all, if therapy is to be an art, it needs to be inspired by something greater than the psychological techniques that constitute it as a craft. In the past, the "greater-than" of faith is what inspired patristic writers as they offered solace to the suffering. For the Fathers, the "greater-than" of faith is what made their art and craft one. And for Christian clinicians today, that same "greater-than" of faith already intertwined in the multi-colored strands of patristic texts can offer them another approach to the art and craft of therapy. With new inspiration from ancient sources, therapist and patient alike can use that filigree floss to weave a beautiful embroidery in which they can discern not only an image of health, but most importantly of all, the image of Christ in the human soul.

Notes

¹ Saints Gregory the Theologian, Basil the Great, and Augustine of Hippo all allude to their thoughtful consideration of Epictetus's writings. See PG 37.72ab, PG 29b.40bc, and PL 41.259-

260 respectively.

- ² Aristotle *Analytica priora et posteriora* 1.1.62a.
³ For example, see Origen *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 2.1 (PG 14.108a) and John Chrysostom *De paenitentia* 8.5 (PG 49.341).
⁴ John Climacus *Scala paradisi* 15.75 (PG 88.897bc).
⁵ Tertullian *De resurrectione carnis* 15 (PL 2.814a).
⁶ Nilus the Ascetic *Capita paraenetica* 70 (PG 79.1255a).
⁷ John Cassian *Collationes* 1.7.4 (PL 49.672).
⁸ John of Damascus *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae* 3.15 (PG 94.1048c).
⁹ Maximus the Confessor *Ad Marinum Presbyterum* (PG 91.277d).
¹⁰ John Climacus *Scala paradisi* 15.75 (PG 88.897bc).
¹¹ Augustine *De Trinitate* 15.10.18 (PL 42.1070–1071).
¹² Gregory of Sinai (*Capita valde utilia per acrostichidem* 66 (PG 150.1257a).
¹³ Gregory of Nyssa *De hominis opificio* 13 (PG 44.169b).
¹⁴ Hilary of Poitiers *De Trinitate* 4 (PL 10.92c).
¹⁵ John Chrysostom *Homiliae in Epistolam primam ad Corinthios* 11.3 (PG 91.61).
¹⁶ John Chrysostom *De statu* 20.1 (PG 49.200).
¹⁷ John Chrysostom *Commentarius in sanctum Matthaeum Evangelistam* 36.5 (PG 57.412).
¹⁸ John Chrysostom *In secundum ad corinthios epistolam commentarius* 28.2 (PG 61.592).
¹⁹ John Chrysostom *In epistolam ad ephesios commentarius* 1.3 (PG 62.92).
²⁰ John Cassian *De coenobiorum institutes* 9.7 (PL 49.356).
²¹ Beck (2008, pp. 969-977) has begun the formidable task of physicalist reductionism by positing a correlation between the diminished control from the prefrontal cortex and the increased activity in the amygdala with metacognition and the activation of dysfunctional schemata in depression. A more detailed account of analytical equivalencies (i.e., Nagel's "bridge laws") is still pending.
²² Maximus the Confessor *Diversa capita ad theologiam* 4.73 (PG 90.1336d).
²³ Maximus the Confessor *Ad presbyterum Marinum* 8 (PG 91.21a).
²⁴ Nilus the Ascetic *Ad Prisco* 3.294 (PG 79.529c).
²⁵ Maximus the Confessor *Capita de charitate* 3.20 (PG 90.1021c).
²⁶ Maximus the Confessor *Capita de charitate* 2.56 (PG 90.1001d).
²⁷ Saint Nilus the Ascetic *Liber de monastica exercitatione* 39 (PG 79.768d).
²⁸ Symeon the New Theologian *Catecheses* 25.9 (SC 113.66).
²⁹ John Chrysostom *In secundum ad corinthios epistolam commentarius* 29 (PG 61.604).
³⁰ John Chrysostom *Commentarius in sanctum Matthaeum Evangelistam* 4.8 (PG 57.48).

- Dorotheus of Gaza *Doctrinae* 1.6 (SC 92.154).
 32 Gregory Palamas *Homiliae* 20 (PG 151.273a).
 33 Maximus the Confessor *Scripturae sacrae quaestionibus ac dubiis* 16 (PG 90.301d).
 34 Maximus the Confessor *Captita de charitate* 3.78 (PG 90.964c).
 35 See Maximus the Confessor *Quaestiones ad Thalassium Prologus* (PG 90.252a); Gregory of Nyssa *De Oratione Dominica* 4 (PG 44.1164bc).
 36 Cyril of Alexandria *Collectio dictorum veteris testamenti* (PG 77.1257b); Evagrius *Capita practica ad Anatolium* 71 (PG 40.1234b).
 37 Maximus the Confessor *Capita de charitate* 4.54 (PG 90.1060c).
 38 See Saint John Climacus *Scala paradisi* 4 (PG 88.709b).
 39 John Chrysostom *De poenitentia* 8.2 (PG 49.338).
 40 Athanasius the Great [pseud.] *Dicta et interpretationes parabolarum evangelii* 130 (PG 28.773a).
 41 John of Damascus *De fide orthodoxa* 2.30 (PG 94.976a).
 42 Asterius of Amaseia *Homiliae* 13 (PG 40.368d).
 43 John of Damascus *De sacris paralleliis* M (PG 96.137d).
 44 John Chrysostom [pseud.] *De poenitentia* (PG 60.766).
 45 John of Damascus *De sacris paralleliis* M (PG 66.112c) and Basil the Great *Homilia in illud attende tibi ipsi* 4 (PG 31.205b).
 46 See “askisis” in Liddell & Scott (1996), p. 257.
 47 See “askisis” in Lampe (1961), p. 244.
 48 See as well, Macarius of Egypt [pseud.] *Liber de charitate* 114 (PG 34.932d).
 49 Dorotheus of Gaza *Doctrinae* 2.39 (SC 92.204).
 50 See Neilus the Ascetic *Tractatus de paupertate voluntaria* 25 (PG 79.1001c). See also John Cassian *De coenobiorum institutes* 2.14 (PL 49.105a) and Evagrius *Rerum monachalium rationes* 8 (PG 40.1260d).
 51 John Climacus *Scala paradisi* 28 (PG 88.1133b).
 52 Compare the remarkably similar appraisals of (Bandura, 1977, p. 188) and John Chrysostom *Commentarius in Acta Apostolorum* 42.4 (PG 60.301).
 53 John Chrysostom *Commentarius in Acta Apostolorum* 29.3 (PG 60.217–218).
 54 Gregory of Nyssa *De virginitate* 23 (PG 46.405c).
 55 See John Chrysostom *De statuis* 13.4 (PG 49.141).
 56 See Hesychius the Presbyter *De temperantia et virtute* 2.72 (PG 93.1536b) and Maximus the Confessor *Capita alia* 102 (PG 90.1424a).
 57 Mark the Acetic *Opusculum* 1.10 (PG 65.905c).
 58 Hesychius the Presbyter *De temperantia et virtute* 1.88 (PG 93.1508c).
 59 John Cassian *De coenobiorum institutes* 6.37 (PL 49.198a).
 60 See Dorotheus of Gaza *Doctrinae* 1.25 (SC 92.184) and Athanasius the Great *Vita S. Antonii* 55 (PG 26.924c).
 61 Abba Poimen *Apophthegmata patrum* II.20 (PG 65.320a) and II.21 (PG 65.328a).
 62 *Paradisus patrum* 18.38 (SC 498.88).
 63 Jerome *Epistola Ad Rusticum Monachum* 125.12 (PL 22.1079).
 64 Origen *Contra Celsum* 7.22 (PG 11.1453b).
 65 John Cassian *De coenobiorum institutes* 6.13 (PL 49.234b–235a).
 66 Maximus the Confessor *Ad Thalassium* 16 (PG 90.300d).
 67 Symeon the New Theologian *Catecheses* 25.9 (SC 113.66).
 68 Augustine *Civitate Dei* 11.30 (PL 41.344).
 69 Neilus the Ascetic *De monachorum praestantia* 24 (PG 79.1089b).
 70 Neilus the Ascetic *Epistola ad Prisco* 3.288 (PG 79.525d).
 71 Neilus the Ascetic *Tractatus de virtutibus excolendis* 36 (PG 79.764d).
 72 See Abba Epiphanius of Cyprus *Apophthegmata patrum* E.9 (PG 65.165b); Dorotheus of Gaza *Epistolae* 7.192 (SC 92.512); Cyprian of Carthage *Liber de zelo et livore* 16 (PL 4.649a).
 73 See Theodore the Studite, *Catecheses* 99, Hellines pateres tis ekkliasis, vol. 18a (Thessaoniki, Greece: Grigorios ho Palamas: 1996), 364.
 74 See John Chrysostom *Commentarius in Acta Apostolorum* 31.3 (PG 60.232).
 75 Augustine *Confessiones* 10.8.2 (PL 32.784).
 76 See Augustine *Confessiones* 10.13.20 (PL 32.787–788).
 77 Augustine *De Trinitate* 11.8.15 (PL 42.996).
 78 Augustine *Retractiones* 2.6 (PL 32.632).
 79 Trader (2012/2011) provides, among other things, a detailed exposition of that subject from an Orthodox Christian perspective.
 80 Athenagoras of Athens *Legatio pro christianis* 16 (PG 6.921a).
 81 John Chrysostom *Commentariorum in Matthaem* 52.3 (PG 58.522).
 82 John Chrysostom *Epistolae ad Olympiadem* 1 (PG 52.549–586). For an adequate English translation, see *Letter to Olympia* (2007).
 83 William Shakespeare, *Alls Well that Ends Well* IV.3.2158.

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Commentaries on Rev. Dr. Alexis Trader's "Patristic Embroidery on a Cognitive Pattern and Other Uses of the Fathers' Yarn: Introducing the Evidence of Early Christian Texts into Therapeutic Practice"

Each issue of Edification begins with a discussion article followed by open peer commentaries that examine the arguments of that paper. The goal is to promote edifying dialogues on issues of interest to the Christian psychological community. The commentaries below respond to Rev. Dr. Alexis Trader's discussion article.

Experiencing Convergence: A Response to Fr. Trader

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The Christian client seeks help from the Christian therapist often because of emotional suffering, perhaps due to the consequences of self-destructive habits. Those very sufferings may constitute a barrier to awareness of the life of the Holy Spirit operating within the Christian client. In his article in this issue of *Edification*, Fr. Alex Trader energetically and poetically proposes an evidenced-based practice of therapy comprising not only Scriptural elements, but incorporating the huge corpus of early Christian wisdom as well. Included would be writings from those warriors in the arena of Christian life known as the Fathers of the Church, as well as more recent Christian luminaries. One of the strugglers for the fullness of the Christian life of more recent times is St. Seraphim of Sarov who is often quoted as saying, "The true aim of our Christian life consists in acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God" (Moore, 2009, p. 112). Such a statement from one who not only shares a living faith with the Christian client, but whose own life gives credibility to such words can clarify the larger goal toward which both the therapist and the client are themselves pressing (Philippians 3:12-15). The treasury of such counsel can be a rich resource indeed not only for the client, but for the therapist as well.

The purpose of this essay is to respond to and expand on Fr. Trader's proposal by offering some practical examples of using selected samples from the writings of the ancient Christian Church Fathers. An example shows how these writings can be incorporated into the therapist's daily practice. The connection of thoughts, feelings, and actions and the insight that by changing thoughts, one may change feelings and actions, is found not only in the writings of modern psychology and neuropsychological texts and studies, but in the work of early Christian writers such as St. John Cassian, St. Isaiah the Solitary, St.

Maximos the Confessor, and stories from the Desert Fathers and Mothers of Egypt, Syria and Palestine (Hass, 2012; Pennock, 2010; Palmer, Sherrard, & Ware, 1979; Ward, 1984).

In my own practice with Christian clients, I have incorporated techniques such as storytelling in the course of therapy. Storytelling has been helpful in communicating how thoughts, actions, and feelings are connected, in assisting the client to reframe events in her life, or in the process of developing new skills to deal with unwanted thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Useful short stories and vignettes abound from a variety of authors. For example, from the *Way of the Ascetics* (Colliander, 1994):

A monk was once asked: "What do you do there in the monastery?" He replied: "We fall and get up, fall and get up, fall and get up again" (p. 54). Troublesome thoughts are the subject of a number of stories. For example:

A brother came to see Abba Poeman and said to him, "Abba, I have many thoughts and they put me in danger." The old man led him outside and said to him, "Expand your chest and do not breathe in." He said, "I cannot do that." Then the old man said to him, "If you cannot do that, no more can you prevent thoughts from arising, but you can resist them" (Ward, 1984, p. 171).

Another example suggests how one might deal with bothersome thoughts. Although the brother in the story complained of thoughts with sexual content, the suggested treatment could apply to any thought such as a worry thought, a temptations to overeat, an anxious thought, or even a depressing thought.

A brother asked one of the elders, "What shall I do? My thoughts are always turned to lust without allowing me an hour's respite, and my soul is tormented by it." He said to him, "Every time the demons suggest these thoughts to you, do not argue with them. For the activity of demons always is to suggest, and suggestions are not sins, for they cannot compel. But it rests with you to welcome them, or not to welcome them. Do you know what

the Midianites did? They adorned their daughters and presented them to the Israelites. They did not compel anyone, but those who consented, sinned with them, while the others were enraged and put them to death. It is the same with thoughts.” The brother answered the old man, “What shall I do, then, for I am weak and passion overcomes me?” He said to him, “Watch your thoughts, and every time they begin to say something to you, do not answer them but rise and pray; kneel down, saying, Son of God, have mercy on me” (Hass, 2012).

More recently, Elder Porphyrios (2005) in *Wounded by Love*, on the subject of the spiritual struggle advised:

Do not occupy yourself with rooting out evil. Christ does not wish us to occupy ourselves with the passions, but with the opposite.... If evil comes to assault you turn all your inner strength to good, to Christ. Pray, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” (Porphyrios, p. 135).

While preparing this essay, I interviewed C. T., a former client who graciously agreed to discuss the benefits she received and continues to experience from her therapeutic encounter. A little background information may be helpful. C. T. is a married woman in her mid-forties. She has three adult children, the youngest of which has a chronic mental illness and learning disabilities. Dealing with the consequences of her daughter’s poor decisions has been a constant struggle for this family and for C. T. particularly. Stressors have included not only inpatient and outpatient mental health treatment and special education services over the years, but multiple runaways, involvement with drug dealers, illegal activities, and incarceration in the local county penal system. Most recently there has been the birth of a child to her unmarried daughter:

Interview

Clark: How has our work together been helpful to you?

C. T. I didn’t have to do anything. I understood and remembered what we discussed and practiced. It’s a miracle that I remembered. If I understand, remember, and make it a part of me, it benefits me and then I can share it with other people. It’s a miracle.

It began with cognitive processing...with a book (Pucci, 2006) and the explanation of the relationship of thoughts, feelings and actions. The explanation of “mental mistakes” was important. I learned that when I get upset about something that someone else does, I have “two problems” not just one, directly applied to me and to my feelings. The possibility that the thoughts that come to me do not always come from my consciousness, my background, or my desires was revolutionary. It was important to know that “not all thoughts come from you!” Therefore, not all thoughts have to be considered or accepted. Then I learned that God is Healer, Physician, and Medicine not a punisher and judge.

Lastly, I learned that on the continuum somewhere between really happy and really sad is peace.

This client’s statements reveal something of the power of the convergence of the tradition Trader discusses with 21st century psychotherapy. The passing down of the stories, teachings, and the legacy of Christian praxis from one person to another, from one generation to another constitutes the tradition. The meeting of this ancient wisdom of ancient Christian spiritual warriors and the needs of the 21st Century mental health therapist and client illustrates the deep relatedness of all human beings though all the ages. For this client, these practices have had benefit not only during the therapeutic sessions, but in the years since active therapy. This is the tradition that the Christian therapist may confidently pass along.

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Healing the Memories of Christian Division

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Twenty years ago now, while an undergraduate studying psychology, I was casting about for a graduate program that would link my then-desire to be both a practicing psychoanalyst and a practicing Christian. I found very few programs that adequately

linked psychology with theology. Almost all programs seemed willing to permit vague talk about “spirituality,” but otherwise to jettison any serious theology in order to win academic credibility and accreditation. (One of the few, if relatively unknown, figures who has done an admirable job of integrating faith with psychoanalysis was the late British analyst Nina Coltart (1998) whose work had a great influence on me. Her work remains a commendable example of a classical analyst able to get past Freud’s dismissive treatment of faith.) It is therefore a very happy development to see the work being done by Alexis Trader in this article and in his book. His work is just the sort of careful scholarly and pastoral integration of psychology and theology that we have so long needed, and I pray this is but the beginning of a long and fruitful work for him.

Reading his article put me in mind of a course I did in my doctoral program at the Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Canada. The course sought out possible connections between the “logismoi” (the “disordered thoughts” or passions—what the West would eventually come to call the “seven deadly sins”) as treated in Evagrius of Pontus, on the one hand, and modern psychology on the other—particularly the work of the Dutch psychologist Han de Wit. De Wit was a pioneer in arguing that a “scientific” conception of mind and emotion that excludes a patient’s spiritual life is not likely to help religious patients. Here de Wit goes up against the ethos of modern psychology as first set forth in Freud’s diatribe, *Moses and Monotheism*, a book about which Christopher Lasch (if memory serves) had the most apt judgment: Freud as an individual clinician often came up with brilliant insights; but Freud as a cultural-religious critic was often greatly out of his depth. I think that Trader would find de Wit an engaging interlocutor.

When I was doing my course-work on Evagrius and the *logismoi*, I turned to a particular area of interest that remains so for me to this day: how to apply psychological theory and practice not just to individual patients,¹ but to the Church as a whole (DeVile, 2004; DeVile, 2005). This is the central question I would pose to Trader: how can psychology be useful to Christians in broad “ecclesial” healing, particularly the “healing of memories” that the late Pope John Paul II so often advocated? For centuries, Christians of all traditions have sometimes been beastly towards one another—whether in Catholic powers such as France persecuting Protestants, Protestant powers such as Tudor England executing Catholics, or the Byzantine Empire persecuting non-Chalcedonian Christians in Egypt and elsewhere.

Is it possible, that is, for psychology to be employed in wider settings beyond application in a clinical setting dealing with one individual at a time, to application in an *ecclesial setting*, dealing with entire churches to bring about broad, communal healing as a prelude to full unity? If so, how? For it seems painfully clear to me, as one whose work

has been heavily focused on Orthodox-Catholic *rapprochement* (DeVile, 2011) that the late pope’s notion of the “healing of memories” is an especially acute and necessary task as part of the work of restoring Christian unity. How can we heal broad, general, and seemingly widespread Greek Orthodox memories—however historically short-sighted some of them may sometimes be²—when the question of the Fourth Crusade is raised? How can we overcome the long-standing hostility some Romanian and Russian Orthodox feel against Eastern Catholics (“uniates”), which has created problems for more than twenty years now in Ukraine and Romania? How can a Presbyterian like Ian Paisley of Northern Ireland be healed of his well-known hatred of Catholics, coming instead to see them as brothers and sisters in Christ? And yet, absent some level of healing in these situations—and others one could name—see Taft (2000-01) and Arjakovsky (2011, pp. 489-500)—is the search for Christian unity not doomed to failure? Is it possible to find means, both in modern psychology and ancient patristic wisdom, to heal these wounds in the very Body of Christ *as a whole*?

Notes

- ¹ A word I greatly prefer—given the meaning behind it which any Christian will appreciate—to the more vulgar consumeristic term “client.”
- ² By that I mean that those demanding Catholic apologies for 1204 forget the part Orthodox Greeks played in a pogrom in May 1182 against Latin Christians in Constantinople, see Gregory, 2010, p. 309.

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Good Therapy and Other Benefits: A Response to Father Alexis Trader

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It has been said that the Church is a hospital for sinners. In saying this to an organization comprised of “Christian therapists,” I would speculate that I’m preaching to the choir. To that end, I see no need to spend too much time touting the direct and therapeutic benefits of Fr. Alexis’s work, as he himself does an admirable job of demonstrating the interconnections between Patristic writings and Cognitive Theory. I will simply say that, having worked for 24 years in the field of alcohol and other drug abuse treatment, I have seen both the benefits to be obtained from Cognitive Theory and the patients who constitute the evidence, however anecdotal, that it can be improved upon for persons of the Christian faith. Further, I think there would be little disagreement in such an organization with the idea that we are to meld our Christian beliefs and our therapeutic approaches. Sadly, this is not an agreed upon stance elsewhere. So much so, if I may be so bold as to suggest, that some “Christian therapists” are such in spite of their education, not because of it. This then is the first benefit I see in Trader’s article. As Christians, we need not live in the shadow of medicine, or philosophy. We have connections to these, from our very beginnings and throughout our history. St. Luke, writer of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, apostle of the seventy and companion of St. Paul, was a physician. And not him only, many early Christians were well aware of the medical sciences. Consider, for example, this passage from the early third century *Didascalia Apostolorum* referencing knowledge of medical practice that goes far beyond the ordinary.

Wherefore, as a compassionate physician, heal all those who sin; and go about with all skill, and bring healing to bear for the succour of their lives. And thou shalt not be ready to cut off the members of the Church; but employ the bandages of the word, and the fomentations of admonition, and the compress of exhortation. But if the sore be sunken and lack flesh, nourish it and level it up with healing drugs; and if there be dirt in it, cleanse it with a pungent drug, that is with the word of rebuke. But if the flesh be over swollen, wear it down and level it with a violent drug that is with the threat of judgment. But if gangrene should set in, cauterize it with burnings, that is, with incisions of much fasting cut away and clear out the rottenness of the sore. But if the gangrene assert itself and prevail even over the burnings, give judgment: and then, whichever member it be that is

putrefied, with advice and much consultation with other physicians, cut off that putrefied member, that it may not corrupt the whole body. Yet be not ready to amputate straightway, and be not in haste to have recourse at once to the saw of many teeth; but use first the knife and cut the sore, that it may be clearly seen, and that it may be known what is the cause of the disease that is hidden within; so that the whole body may be kept uninjured. But if thou see that a man will not repent, but has altogether abandoned himself, then with grief and to sorrow cut him off and cast him out of the Church (Connolly, 1929).

Not only did the early church possess knowledge of medicine, but it put it to practice. Reaching out, throughout the ages, to the sick and infirm not only has the church used prayers, but also hands. Indeed, even a casual search on the internet for hospitals will reveal how many modern hospitals bear names like Saint Anthony’s, Saint Mary’s, Saint Agnes, Saint Elizabeth’s, Saint Luke’s, All Saints, or Sacred Heart.

These hospitals were begun by the church to the collective credit of all Christians.

For philosophy, consider the Areopagus sermon delivered by St. Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-34), the Apologia of St. Justin Martyr, or, frankly, the writings of almost any of the Church Fathers. This Fr. Alexis illustrates wonderfully including Church Fathers and even a Church mother, from almost every age. From the second century writer, Tertullian to Saint Gregory of Nyssa (335–394), Saint John Chrysostom (349–407), Saint Nilus the Ascetic (†c. 430), Saint Dorotheus of Gaza (505–565), Saint Maximus the Confessor (580–662), Saint John of Damascus (676–749), Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), Saint Gregory of Sinai (1260–1346), Saint Gregory Palamas (1269–1359), and even the early nineteenth century Russian saint, Theophan the Recluse, and the Orthodox monastic father, Elder Paisios (1924–1994).

Secondly, this is an opportunity to reclaim our heritage. Most Evangelical Christians likely would trace their spiritual lineage back through the reformers to the Roman Catholic Church and from there to the early Church, and so to many of the very Fathers, Trader references. Unfortunately, it is probably a safe guess that many of us have never heard of most of them. To be certain, most western Christians may be familiar with the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, but few have awareness of the ongoing existence of that Eastern Church. Still, for me at least, it is to this Eastern Orthodox Church that I owe a debt of gratitude for reintroducing me to so many of these men and women who are the spiritual ancestors of us all. To you, I would then extend an invitation. Do you know your spiritual forefathers? Are you familiar with the wealth of written material from the early Church that complements, supplements, and augments the Holy Scriptures? If not, seek it out, in the internet age, it has never been easier to do so. You will find yourself immeasurably enriched.

Lastly, let us consider that while there are some who call themselves “Christian therapists,” likely there are many Christians, who happen to be therapists, but are not “Christian therapists” in the way that Trader might use the term. Of these, I would not presume to argue against their integrity or desire, but would suggest that this self-same lack of knowledge which I have so recently lamented may have led to the very difficulties which Fr. Alexis’s article is poised to counteract. While you as a “Christian therapist” likely do integrate your faith and your practice, ask yourself, could the thought exist in others, in therapists who are Christians, but not “Christian therapists,” that faith is for Sunday morning and therapy is for Monday through Friday? Could that thought arise from the misguided secular teaching, all too often unchallenged, that the church has little practical relevance and less academic standing? I have every confidence that in an organization comprised of “Christian therapists” that many, if not all, would bristle at such notions. But still, would not such a thought arise all too easily in believers living in unfortunate isolation from the very legacy which would be theirs if they but knew it? So then ask yourself this also, does our responsibility to help as “Christian therapists” extend to our patients alone or also to one’s profession and to one’s church? Here then, by adaptation of this material, can misgivings regarding the intellectual richness of Christianity be debased. Here then can reconnection with our common past be obtained, not only for ourselves and our patients, but for also any unconnected peers with whom we interact.

That then is the challenge and the blessing laid before us, to see Father Alexis’s article not only as a boon to our patients, but also to our peers and ourselves.

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Some Loose Ends that Might Need Tying up

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The tendency to think in terms of “Orthodox

Psychotherapy” has become popular in certain circles since Hierotheos Vlachos published his eponymous title in 1986. Most such constructions, however, have employed the term “psychotherapy” only very loosely. While these volumes convincingly demonstrate the depth of patristic insight into the human soul and their manifest desire to bring healing to it, the language barrier between patristic theology and modern clinical methodology has remained practically insurmountable. The category of “Orthodox Psychotherapy,” consequently, has generated plenty of conversation about spirituality, pastoral care, and counseling, and has inspired a number of individual Orthodox Christians serving in various branches of professional therapy, but it has thus far failed to generate significant interest in the technical conversations of the psychological community.

The Rev. Dr. Alexis Trader, however, may have provided us with a way forward, offering a new and more convincing model for integrating these fields of discourse. Fr. Trader suggests the use of patristic “evidence” as a sort of “embroidery” to contemporary therapeutic practice, noting correctly that therapy is as much an art as a science, and that that art may need to draw on external sources – such as the Church Fathers – for inspiration. The respect that he pays to the integrity of current psychical theories and models is tangible: his approach will undoubtedly be recognizable to his colleagues in various psychotherapeutic disciplines, and accordingly will be received as worth a hearing. In this respect, Fr. Trader’s work is a tremendous step forward, and makes a substantial contribution to the conversation.

But because Fr. Trader’s study is so potentially useful and so potentially influential, it is worth stepping back from his impressive achievement to consider what loose ends might need to be tied up, where his thesis might be enhanced, or what particular weaknesses may need to be bolstered from another angle. Speaking as one who gravitates toward the historical and philosophical reading of the holy Fathers, I would like to suggest three main possibilities for further reflection.

First, while Fr. Trader has successfully legitimized the use of the term “psychotherapy” in his patristic hermeneutic, he has only done so at the cost of reducing the Father’s contribution to a kind of style or flourish on an underlying, evidentially established system of soul-healing. This is, I think, an unintentional trivialization. Fr. Trader intends to honor the Fathers by earning them a seat at the table; but in fact, insofar as such flourishes can be casually used or discarded according to the needs of the particular therapist, patient, or situation, he reduces them to non-threatening curiosities. While this may be appealing to therapists answerable to a pluralistic constituency, it would be appalling to Fathers to whom Fr. Trader turns, who found their understanding of the human person thoroughly and inextricably woven into their doctrine of

Christ. Classical Christian devices may need to be legitimated to the psychological community, but in providing such justification, we must not forget that they have their own internal logic, structure, and context utterly distinct from assumptions of contemporary psychotherapy.

Accordingly, as a second point, when the Fathers are read with a view to the integrity of their anthropological thought, they may in fact have a role to play in *challenging* our deepest philosophical assumptions about the nature and constitution of the human person. Not only does each of the Fathers have his own unique insights into the human condition and human psychology, they were also enmeshed in the patchwork of classical philosophical anthropologies, each of which is quite different from our contemporary view. Dixon's (2006) landmark study *From Passions to Emotions* might be a helpful counterpoint in investigating these kinds of questions. As Dixon convincingly demonstrates, much of the rise of contemporary psychological language and method arose in an explicit attempt to provide a secular alternative to the Christian language of interiority. It may not be enough, then, to simply accept the dominant psychological paradigm as normative: the very framework may be in need of critique.

Finally, Fr. Trader's reverent appropriation of patristic texts is both beautiful and useful, but he has made it look far too easy. One may come away from Fr. Trader's article with the impression that any therapist could purchase the library set of the SVS Popular Patristics Series and be immediately equipped with an unending supply of psychological anecdotes and aphorisms. Unfortunately, the patristic works are by no means uniformly applicable to contemporary therapeutic task: it requires a significant amount of historical spade-work to situate the Fathers in their context and really understand their mind and method. In point of fact, following through with Fr. Trader's method will require a veritable cottage industry of psychologically-oriented patrology to make and promote these connections, and integrate these insights with the bewildering variety of Christian counseling models.

This critique should not in any means be read as disparaging to Fr. Trader's work: he has given both the psychological community and the Church a tremendous gift in opening their discourses to one another so intimately. One would hope that Fr. Trader continues this work – or perhaps better yet, that the community using and refining this approach continues to grow and flourish. "Orthodox Psychotherapy" is a rich vein for ongoing reflection, conversation, and dialogue. Fr. Trader has compellingly demonstrated this by both providing us with excellent food for thought and demonstrating for us the immediate usefulness of the patristic word in the therapeutic project.

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Embroidering on the World's Cloth?

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In the theological integration literature, it is rare to encounter references to the Fathers of the Western Church, and it is even more uncommon to find references to the Fathers of the Orthodox Tradition. With this in mind, Trader's article is a significant contribution to the field both in terms of the depth of his analysis as well as the manner in which he has fashioned a work of embroidery, using the yarn of the Church Fathers and the cloth of cognitive therapy.

The Embroidery

The work of embroidery utilizes the form and structure of the cloth to provide a foundation for creating a work of art in which the needlepoint captures the attention and the cloth recedes into the background. In this article, the author's familiarity with the Church Fathers is such that his examination of Axiom 9 places the ancient wisdom of the Fathers into the foreground, creating a thematic convergence between the Church Fathers and cognitive therapy. Thus, on a theoretical level, he makes the argument that insights drawn from the Church Fathers are compatible with the structures of cognitive therapy. Indeed, his use of the Fathers places their writings in the forefront with cognitive therapy forming the background against which to contemplate their wisdom.

While Trader's aim is to demonstrate the compatibility of the Church Fathers with a specific evidence-based theory, the value of his thesis extends beyond the framework of cognitive therapy. Christian therapists employ a wide range of therapeutic modalities that include a variety of evidence-based theories (i.e., Cognitive Therapy, Emotionally-Focused Therapy, mindfulness-based interventions, etc.). These evidence-based approaches are rooted within culturally embedded constructions, each of which poses its own set of challenges when it comes to counseling persons of faith. As a result, Christian

counselors have a particular responsibility to engage these modes of intervention in a process of theological reflection. To this end, Trader's article is a summons to all Christian therapists, irrespective of theoretical orientation, to read the Church Fathers with a view to allowing their wisdom to inform our clinical practice: both in terms of our conceptualizations as well as our interventions. Within my own practice domain, Marriage and Family Therapy, this would move beyond my own preliminary explorations of this subject (Mutter, 1996, 1998) to draw on the wealth of ancient source material pertaining to marriage and family (cf., Aquinas, 1920; Augustine, 1955; Chrysostom, 1983; Hunter, 1992; Oden, 1994)

A second aspect of Trader's "embroidery" may be seen in his reflection on the use of patristic wisdom as a vehicle for within-session reflection and the use of longer patristic texts for between session reflection. Indeed, these reflections demonstrate the ease with which both the practical wisdom of the Fathers and Christian spiritual disciplines (i.e., *askesis*, contemplation, reading Christian texts) may be incorporated within the practice of cognitive therapy (cf., Oden, 1984, pp. 38-40). Indeed, this use of the spiritual disciplines highlights the fact that an important part of what distinguishes Christian therapy from other therapeutic approaches occurs on the level of practice rather than the theoretical level. Considered in this light, Trader's article reminds us of the value of engaging in purposeful reflection as to which spiritual disciplines to incorporate within the therapeutic endeavor and when to use them.

The Cloth

Trader has elected to draw the embroidery floss of patristic wisdom through the cloth of cognitive therapy, leaving the reader with a sense that the structures of this theory provide a suitable foundation for incorporating ancient insights concerning the human person, the intricacies of the mind, and the cure of the soul. In so doing, he emulates the practice of most Christian counselors who seek to infuse Christian values and principles into recognized secular theories. It cannot be overlooked that cognitive therapy is not only the most widely taught and researched therapeutic model in current usage, its use by Christian counselors reflects the Christian community's tendency to privilege rationality over other aspects of life (i.e., emotion). With this in mind, it is appropriate to consider whether the absence of the God assumption within this, or any other theory, affects that theory's understanding of the human person, virtue, etc. to the point where it cannot serve as an adequate host for Christian values because it lacks the requisite structures and assumptions to stitch Christian practice onto secular theory. This is an important question to consider with all modes of therapy (i.e., cognitive, psychoanalytic, experiential, systemic).

Technique

Embroidery can be appreciated both from a distance (i.e., its visual effect) as well as up close (i.e., an examination of the technical skill of the artisan). In this case, Trader employs a correlational approach to theological integration which focuses on parallels between cognitive therapy and the Church Fathers. This approach is consistent with his desire to demonstrate that the wisdom of the Fathers is compatible with cognitive therapy. The result, as he notes, is an intertwining of cognitive therapy's evidence-based framework with the moral and practical wisdom of the Church Fathers. This, however, raises the question as to whether his focus on parallels limits his/our understanding and use of the Fathers in clinical practice. Indeed, as Oden (1984) and Dunnington (2011) each demonstrate, a second role for the classical tradition is to critique contemporary counseling wisdom.

To this end, Trader hints at, but does not develop, a potential critique of cognitive therapy when he identifies a desire to "expand the range of admissible data beyond the putatively causal paradigms of utilitarian science to include the existentially meaningful evidence of revelation in the forms of the Old and New Testaments, as well as their own experiences of God." Similarly, he also identifies that the space where the spiritual horizon is opened up is the context where "utilitarian quantification, conceptualization, and behavioral/cognitive techniques can be balanced by words open to a world vibrant with the presence of the grace of God." This acknowledgment of another dimension, in spite of identified axiomatic and pragmatic convergences between the Fathers and cognitive therapy, invites reflection on the ways in which the Fathers' emphasis on the presence and grace of God critiques cognitive counseling theory.

Finally, as a reader with some awareness of the Fathers, I very much appreciated the diversity of his sources and the scope of his working knowledge of the Fathers. Nevertheless, those who are unfamiliar with the sources he cites will be excused if they perceive his use of patristic texts, aside from his very helpful summary of Chrysostom's letter to Olympia, as an exercise in proof-texting cognitive therapy. Indeed, this perception of proof-texting combined with his correlational approach to integration raises the question whether the Church Fathers have been employed in the service of cognitive therapy or vice-versa? Herein is an important caution for all. Namely, any credible attempt to integrate the Fathers into our therapeutic models and practices needs to employ these sources in ways that convey the full meaning of our sources and that consider the ways in which the Fathers critique and confirm the counseling theory under examination.

Conclusion

Trader's exploration of the use of patristic

wisdom within the practice of cognitive therapy not only confirms the value of integrating these two perspectives, it invites Christian therapists practicing a variety of modalities to explore the Church Fathers with a view to discerning how their wisdom may be reflected in therapeutic practice. Indeed, Trader has shown us that one can embroider Kingdom wisdom upon the world's cloth.

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Ancient Christian Spirituality as Evidence Base for Practice in Psychology

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Fr. Alexios's article is a welcome addition to the vital, underdeveloped conversation between ancient Christian spirituality and modern psychology and psychotherapy. While there is a growing openness

to such efforts within academic and training programs in the mental health disciplines, the wealth of experience and knowledge within the ancient Christian tradition that is waiting to be tapped and utilized for clinical and training purposes is inexhaustible. Fr. Alexios frames his essay as one which adds patristic spirituality to the evidence base that supports psychotherapeutic treatment. From the perspective of secular psychology, the American Psychological Association's Policy Statement on Evidence-Based Practice in Psychology (2005) states that "evidence-based practice in psychology is the integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture, and preferences."¹

This raises the lively questions of whether and how patristic spirituality has a legitimate place as an "evidence base" for psychotherapy. It is here that Fr. Alexios's ability to draw two different traditions of healing, one psychological and one spiritual, into interactive contact with one another, is most useful. He is able to demonstrate particular ways in which the evidence offered by patristic spirituality is actually two-fold. There is the textual evidence, which can be drawn from ancient Christian literature that has become increasingly accessible via Internet search engines and English translations. We also have the evidence of the patristic style of soul care that exists in the ongoing ministry life of communities of faith, in the forms of worship, prayer, service, and pastoral care and counsel. Fr. Alexios offers examples of the ways in which spiritual elders draw upon the patristic tradition by entering into the experiences and suffering of those in their care through the use of powerful metaphors from scripture and church tradition. He then connects these specific spiritual "interventions" to analogous efforts to build healthy and life-giving meaning systems through cognitive therapy, while simultaneously identifying, challenging, and altering destructive and self-destructive cognitive schemata.

The particular use of cognitive therapy as a partner with patristic spirituality in this effort at interdisciplinary conversation is compelling. Cognitive therapy emphasizes things like self-observation, the reframing of meaning, developing more sophisticated habits of mind, and the power of repetition to affect the mind, even at the level of brain physiology. Fr. Alexios points out ways in which a spiritual life focused on repentance, healing, and growth relies on these same elements as agents of change and intensified relationship with God.

Something which Fr. Alexios clearly addresses, but which may benefit from even greater emphasis, is the inescapable and ubiquitous evidence that psychotherapy, regardless of the theoretical or technical approach, is successful only in the context of a therapeutic relationship, or alliance, that is experienced by the patient in particular, helpful ways (Duncan, Miller, Wampold, & Hubble, 2010, p. xxi):

"Therapeutic efficacy inheres primarily in the

patient's experience and in the use of remoralizing, resource-enhancing, and motivating relationship with a therapist who is supportive and challenging (in proportions and at times that suit the patient's needs and abilities)."

In other words, human relationships are the vehicle for human growth and change. Within the context of a solid working alliance, spiritual elders, both ancient and modern, as well as psychotherapists draw upon the particular *techne* (art and technique) that is most likely to facilitate change and growth in those they serve.

While Fr. Alexios effectively and creatively provides an interdisciplinary theoretical grounding for a conversation between patristic spirituality and cognitive therapy, the intensely unique and particular relational elements of the therapeutic encounter risk being underappreciated. It goes without saying that the spiritual elder must know the scriptures and tradition of the church in order to care for souls, and the master psychotherapist must know clinical theory and technique to treat patients. And yet, a skill that transcends the informational aspects of their disciplines is that of wisely and lovingly "knowing *how* to know another:"

"By understanding the idiosyncratic way an individual organizes knowledge, emotion, sensation, and behavior, a therapist has more choice about how to influence him or her in all these areas and to contribute to the improvements in life for which he or she has sought professional help" (McWilliams, 1999, p. 11).

The introduction of any idea, technique, suggestion, or resource into the therapeutic encounter, be it spiritual or psychological, is always mediated through a complex and dynamic interplay within the therapeutic relationship. The healer's ability to be a guide and partner to the person in his or her care, to maintain and contain adequate levels of trust, diminishment of shame, tolerance for ambiguity, clarification and progress towards goals, and cycles of rupture and repair is key to the facilitation of a therapeutic process. Specific texts and techniques from both the patristic and the cognitive therapy traditions, therefore, have the greatest opportunity for coming to transformative life as they are discerningly geared to the particular therapeutic relationship and situation.

Fr. Alexios has clearly identified a powerful convergence of ideas and approaches to depth psycho-spiritual healing in bringing patristic spirituality and cognitive therapy into purposeful conversation. It will be an important next step for the community of spiritually-oriented psychotherapists to continue to add to the evidence base by describing, through research and case vignettes, the impact of this convergence on the particular work they are doing with clients hungry for the kind of hope and change that emanate from this convergence.

Note

- ¹ APA Statement, Policy Statement on Evidence-Based Practice in Psychology (2005).

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Ethical Challenges to the Clinical Use of Patristics

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I appreciate the opportunity to respond to Father Trader's article exploring the relationship between the *Philokalia* and aspects of Beck's Cognitive Therapy. This article presents a well-reasoned conceptual bridge between Patristic writings and modern therapeutic practice. The connections drawn between Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy and this ancient literature is both compelling and exciting, reinforcing for us that when many sources arrive at the same destination, we are in the presence of truth. As a counselor educator I am well aware of the challenges present in applying scriptural truth to the field of behavioral science research and practice. This article provides a perspective that enhances this connection from sources that I frankly had not previously considered.

I am supportive of the primary premise of this article and would like to offer some further practical considerations regarding the potential ethical implications for Father Trader's proposal. As a practicing psychologist who teaches ethics, practical application of the issues suggested in this article seem of primary importance. It should be noted that my reaction is from the perspective of a practitioner operating within an Evangelical Protestant worldview. Therefore, the difficulties of clinical use of Patristic texts may in large measure be a function of my lack of knowledge or awareness of these rich resources. In this way, this article challenges my limited worldview and ideally inspires me to become more aware of these resources that may serve my clients and students well. Toward that end I will briefly outline the portions of the article that I found to be most salient and then summarize the ethical and practical considerations I

would propose for practitioners.

That automatic thoughts can serve a positive purpose is an important point highlighted by the author. Integration of this concept with the writings of ancient authors provides historic support for Beck's theory especially for use with clients seeking an explicitly Christian approach to their therapy. Additionally, it is important to note that Patristic writings noted these concepts well before Beck's Cognitive Therapy or Seligman's (2004) positive psychology. I highlight this point, for in my work with Christian clients, a belief system that mistakenly places psychology and faith in opposition is a significant impediment to their psychological functioning. For some of these clients, ancient extra biblical sources that document psychologically healthy responses to struggles similar to theirs could be a powerful resource. Likewise, as Trader notes, the "realization that automatic thoughts are not absolute truths" can be an important paradigm change for clients caught in a dysfunctional loop of self-sustaining negative thought patterns.

My pragmatic concerns surround ethical considerations in the use of what the author has proposed. He points out the "daunting task of choosing 'patristic maps' for use with clients". This appropriate concern for competence in the use of this literature can be a considerable challenge for the practitioner, such as myself, with very limited exposure to this literature. To use Patristic literature in practice, several concerns must be resolved. The primary issue is one of informed consent. That I am a Christian Psychologist does not guarantee that all of my clients come to me seeking explicitly spiritual interventions in their treatment (Tan, 2011). It is very possible that some of my clients who identify themselves as Christians may not consent to the use of scripture, prayer, or patristic literature in their treatment. Additionally, for those clients who consent to explicitly spiritual interventions, it is still incumbent upon the psychologist to engage in the ongoing process of matching interventions with the client's current level of functioning and spiritual maturity. In this case the use of patristic literature may be more a matter of timing than all or none. As Bufford (1997) points out, Christian therapy "actively utilizes spiritual interventions and resources within ethical guidelines" (p. 120).

Finally, I would anticipate that more conservative Christian clients would have some resistance to the authority of these ancient authors. Patristic literature is not a typical part of their faith tradition. As much as those of us familiar with this vital literature may bemoan this lack of exposure, the fact remains that many clients will be ill-served if Christian psychologists expect them to make a leap of faith in accepting ancient literature as authoritative. This captures, in part, my concern for the ethical principle of competence. At what point is an evangelical Protestant well versed enough in this literature to handle the use of it well in clinical practice? We must have the wisdom to be strategic and discerning in choosing clients with whom to suggest the use of this literature, as we are cautious with the "daunting task" of choosing patristic authors. I would advocate that the willing clinician work from the "inside out." With the guidance of mentors such as the author, perhaps a Christian psychologist should choose patristic literature for personal devotional use. At the point that one has explored a Patristic author and seen the value for themselves, that psychologist is in a much better position to "sell" this idea to a client. In this way, the ethical concerns of competence and consent are answered, and the practitioner can be more secure of ethical and competent use of these valuable resources with their clients.

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Another Look at the Integrity of the Fathers' Yarn and the Utility of the Patristic Embroidery on a Cognitive Pattern

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Gifted artists and those skilled at a craft hold themselves and their colleagues to high standards that have been gradually honed through the experience of trying to produce something of genuine value and use. The tension between the variant standards of aesthetics and utility, however, is fully resolved only in the most ideal of worlds. The same can be said of the criteria employed by academic theologians and clinical psychologists. After all, there is an indisputable conceptual distance between faithfully striving to articulate the *normative, revealed* message of the Gospel and impartially endeavoring to operationalize *descriptive, empirical* pathways for therapeutic change. Nevertheless, the aspiration to bridge these conceptual domains for the sake of relieving human suffering and offering tangible hope is a worthy aim, especially for Christian therapists providing care for their clients' who follow Christ. On this point, I believe all the thoughtful respondents to my piece are in full agreement.

In my discussion article, I attempted to build one such conceptual bridge between cognitive therapy and the patristic tradition by providing a practical example of the bibliotherapeutic use of a patristic source and by offering a theoretical examination of parallels between the propositions that constitute Beck's Axiom 9 in his formal theoretical statement of cognitive therapy on the one hand and the teachings inherent in patristic writings on the other. For the sake of opening the conversation, I attempted to employ a non-manipulative approach to integration (Entwistle, 2004) at the theoretical level through the thought experiment of patristic embroidery on a cognitive axiom. Once that task was completed, I tried to present a practical example in a framework within which the Christian worldview fills the horizon of therapeutic practice. But, were my endeavors successful?

Peer review in psychology and conciliar consensus in theology suggest that dialogue and feedback are essential for answering such questions. Feedback from others is indeed a precious gift that invites artists and artisans to shift their attention by viewing their work with another set of eyes that can confirm that a standard has been attained, suggest complementary ways to achieve it, or even indicate that the present criterion be modified or set aside (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). I am quite appreciative of the rich and constructive feedback provided by the

accomplished artists and masters of their craft who carefully and insightfully commented on my article. They have encouraged me to reflect on the integrity of the yarn, the utility of the embroidery, and the possibilities that extend beyond what I had originally conceived. In the presence of their kind and thought-provoking commentaries, I find my work enriched and myself most grateful.

The Integrity of the Patristic Yarn

Dr. **Kelvin Mutter** and Rev. Deacon **Nathaniel Kidd** both express some understandable reservations about the use of the fathers in my initial patristic-cognitive thought experiment. I fully share Dr. Mutter's musings about whether a theory without the God assumption can serve as an adequate host for Christian values. In my longer work devoted to relating patristic literature with Aaron Beck's cognitive therapy, I do note that the "Christian is obliged to reject certain assumptions present in a scientific worldview, such as the beliefs that God is not active in history, that Divine Providence is not present in the life of the individual, and that the human being can be understood sufficiently without reference to God" (Trader, 2011/2012, p. 252). In the same work, I also note that for the fathers, psychological balance is not achieved by rational reappraisals moderating emotion, but by the grace of the Holy Spirit illuminating the *nous* or spiritual heart, constructs that to my knowledge have no analogue in any current psychological theories.

There is certainly merit to Rev. Deacon **Nathaniel Kidd's** concern for preserving the integrity of the fathers' message, and I do admit to taking them out of their native element by designing a thought experiment, which as such "aims to persuade by reflection on its design rather than its execution" (Sorensen, 2010, p. 1507). My exercise is not meant to suggest that this is how the fathers should ordinarily be used or read, but is simply intended to demonstrate the existence of important points of contact that psychologists would be well-advised to take seriously. If "unintentional trivialization" were the result, I have good reason to believe that the fathers would bless the intention and forgive the transgression. In *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy* (Trader, 2011/2012), I discussed three potential approaches to culture by historical figures in the Church:

Tertullian's model of resistance, rejection and enmity; Valentinus's model of absorption, manipulation, and merger; and Clement of Alexandria's model of selection, integration, and transfiguration. Based on writings by spiritual giants of the patristic tradition such as Saint Justin the Martyr, Saint Basil the Great, and Saint Maximus the Confessor, I concluded that the preferred patristic paradigm is one of discerning openness, which I believe extends even to the modest thought experiment in my discussion article. From the lives of the Saints and my experience with ascetic fathers on the Holy Mountain of Athos, I can affirm that the fathers were also men of great compassion, loving kindness, discernment, understanding, and humility. I suspect that they would be more pleased that the word of God is being disseminated, than they would be disturbed by the possibility that the soil may necessarily bring forth fruit.

I would also concur with Dr. **Kelvin Mutter** that the thought experiment in my essay does limit one's understanding and use of the fathers in clinical practice. My patristic embroidery on a single axiom can also be conceptualized as one notable overlapping area of the two-set Venn diagram comprised of the domains of cognitive theory and patristic literature. For a critique of cognitive therapy, we need to turn our focus to material outside of the intersection, patristic teachings that do challenge our deepest, philosophical assumptions as Rev. Kidd notes. Again, the confines of a small essay did not allow me to explore that material, although I do give it some consideration in *Ancient Christian Wisdom*.

The Utility of Patristic Embroidery on a Cognitive Pattern

Dr. **Katherine Clark** and **Robert Gibson** have understood so very well that one of my aims in bringing together cognitive therapy and the church fathers is to point Christian counselors in a direction that will enable them to help their Christian clients with what I see as some of the most powerful material for bringing about change from two worlds, that of clinical psychology and that of Christianity. Clark and Gibson's own clinical experience resonates well with the empirical support now available for both the efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy as a modality for many disorders (Hofmann, Asnaani, Vonk, Sawyer, & Fang, 2012) and the value of spirituality as a moderator for positive change (Kelly, Hoepfner, Stout, & Pagano, 2012; Galanter, Dermatis, Bunt, Williams, Trujillo, & Steinke, 2007). Dr. **Adam DeVille** noted that the Dutch psychologist Han de Wit suggested that a person's spiritual life must be taken into account when dealing with religious patients. This realization is now happily codified in the APA boundaries of competence for ethical practice (APA, 2010). For this reason, among others, I think that the time is ripe for the consideration of the offerings of Christian literature in general for the sake of the psychological health and well being of Christian clients. Truly, as Dr. **Lee Wetherby**

observes, the fact of many sources reaching the same destination adds strength to one's convictions, an observation not unrelated to the reproducibility that scientists require for the validation of experimental results.

A genuine dialogue between patristic tradition and contemporary therapy is a new development as Rev. Deacon **Nathaniel Kidd** perceptively remarks. I also recall many years ago being quite impressed by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos's work *Orthodox Psychotherapy* (1986), an exciting presentation of the hesychastic approach to the healing of the Christian soul, but not particularly amenable for dialogue with other conventional psychotherapies. I should point out that in his Greek writings, Vlachos (2004) has noted that there is some important overlap between patristic approaches to healing the soul and Victor Frankl's logotherapy, which affirms that in addition to physical and psychological needs, human beings have a need for their lives to have a sense of meaning and that under all conditions they can acquire that sense of meaning by responding to their unique situation in a way that is consistent with their personal hierarchy of values (Schulenberg, Hutzell, Nassif, & Rogina, 2008). This is indeed another area worthy of patristic exploration, especially since Frankl's existential approach covers certain issues for which conventional cognitive therapeutic strategies are less than ideal.

I am particularly grateful to Dr. **Katherine Clark** for her corroborating clinical evidence for the proposition that patristic literature can enhance therapy with Christian patients. I agree wholeheartedly that therapeutic storytelling is a fitting context for many patristic based interventions, and I find her selections from the desert fathers to be quite astute, for the desert fathers and mothers dealt with emotional and cognitive problems within a Christian framework that can certainly help contemporary Christians with similar struggles. Furthermore, the accounts of the desert fathers are brief and accessible, not describing unapproachable heroes, but ordinary people in common dilemmas daring to take heroic advice.

It should be obvious to Christians familiar with the parables of Christ that stories can provide additional insight into personal problems (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, & Money, 2005). Merely the discovery of others with similar problems and through this realizing their identity as worthy Christian strugglers can be empowering and provide some relief to emotional distress. When aspects of a client's problem-saturated story coincide with the problems of those who went to the desert fathers for counsel, identification can be followed by catharsis and insight, thus involving the entire person in the healing process (McCullish, 2012). Under these conditions, the desert fathers' word of advice or counsel can be extremely powerful and even re-story a strand or subplot in the client's extensive, personal narrative (Richert, 2003).

Part of therapy, especially of the cognitive behavioral variety, has to do with teaching clients about the relationship between affect, cognition, and metacognition. Storytelling allows that information to be passed on in ways that are more familiar to clients. Moreover, for clients who view psychology and faith in opposition, the thoroughly Christian idiom of patristic language could potentially lower resistance, as Dr. **Lee Wetherbee** suggests. Dr. **Katherine Clark**'s examples from the desert fathers demonstrate how these texts can be used to reach that therapeutic goal in a way that expresses human warmth in the context of Christian compassion. In other words, via the texts of the desert fathers, psycho-education can be accomplished through instruction about a thoroughly Christian perspective on emotional and cognitive problems.

The value of **Robert Gibson**'s reference to the *Didascalia Apostolorum* extends beyond documenting the saliency of medical metaphors in Christian writings, for the precise, medical terms used in the Greek original at SC 329 2.41.34-50 can also be found throughout the vast Galenic corpus of classical medical knowledge (Metzger, 1985-1987; Kühn, 1821-1833), suggesting a rich history of Christian integration with healing practices and theories *of the day*. I thought that Rev. Gibson's comment—"we need not live in the shadow of medicine or philosophy"—was highly significant. This remark in no way disparages medicine or philosophy, or for that matter whatsoever things that are good and true (Phil. 4:8, KJV), but rather encourages Christian counselors to become connected to the Christian tradition of healing that is documented from the time of the books of the New Testament up until the present. But without a connection to Christian approaches to medicine in fact and metaphor, without a connection to Christian philosophy as a way of reasoning and seeing, the weight of secular medicine and philosophy can overwhelm the Christian counselor. With that blessed, Christian connection in place and with the study of sacred Scripture as a given, the Christian aspect of Christian counselors' identity can be strengthened. It is even possible that through the study of patristic methods, Christian counselors might move beyond the unenviable position of defending Christianity among their peers to the more promising role of offering them additional Christian-derived paradigms for healing.

I appreciate Dr. **Lee Wetherbee** pointing out the issue of informed consent, a subject that fits nicely with two important patristic soteriological concepts, namely, *synergeia*, meaning working together for a common aim, and *sygkatabasis*, meaning accommodation or concession to human weakness or limitations (Lampe, 1961). To apply patristic approaches in the spirit of the fathers, clients are invited to agree of their own free will to work with such methods, whereas therapists are called to use patristic interventions that are appropriate to the spiritual strengths and weaknesses of the client. This is

certainly consistent with ethical guidelines stipulating that written informed consent to Christian-modified treatment be made "as early as feasible." And since informed consent is conceptualized as an ongoing process, therapists can and should seek consent for specific uses of scripture, prayer, meditation, or patristic literature throughout the course of therapy (Fisher, 2012).

As for the possible resistance of conservative Christian clients to the authority of unknown, ancient Christian authors, this would indeed be a nearly insurmountable, epistemic obstacle if these writings were to be presented as authoritative on the level of sacred scripture or as an alternative to the biblical text, but they need not be proffered in this way. These ancient Christian writers are also quite simply Christians "who allow the word of Christ to judge every aspect of their life—every act, every word, every inner movement of thought and feeling, no matter how small" (Sakharov, 1999, p. 213). Fundamentalists can be described as those who "use their sacred text as the framework and justification for all thought and action" (Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005, p. 25). By contrasting these two similar descriptions of disparate groups, I am neither suggesting that the church fathers were fundamentalists nor the converse, but rather I am pointing to a common existential commitment to living according to the Gospel that could reduce resistance in some conservative Christians. If patristic interventions are not framed in terms of accepting another authority, but in terms of listening to a supporting voice with a similar conviction about living according to the word of God, some openness may be possible without a leap of faith.

As for the issue of competence, I fully endorse Dr. Wetherbee's suggestion that clinicians begin with personal, devotional use and add to their repertoire one text at a time. If a passage speaks to the clinician cognitively and emotionally, it may well speak to a client. Such was the rationale of Saint Augustine when he was thinking about how Saint Anthony the Great's life was radically transformed by merely hearing the Gospel read and was wondering whether his own life could undergo such a transformation if he just heeded the voice of a child saying "take up and read."² Most clinicians have read Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959/2006) at some point in their careers, and this reading has been sufficient to provide the competency to offer it to clients struggling with clearly difficult life crises (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2010). Patristic readings can similarly be incorporated into broader bibliotherapy approaches. Rev. Deacon **Nathaniel Kidd** is of course quite right that it is no easy task to search patristic sources for material that therapists could find of use. Indeed, some of the patristic citations in my own article were taken from Greek and Latin texts yet to be translated into the English language. Nevertheless, the sayings of the desert fathers, patristic letters, and patristic homilies in English are certainly fertile fields ripe for

exploration and even ready for harvest (John 4:35, KJV).

Beyond Patristic Embroidery on a Cognitive Pattern

I agree emphatically with Dr. **Kelvin Mutter** that the implications of the thought experiment about the convergence of patristic literature and Axiom 9 extend beyond cognitive therapy and cognitive theory. The convergence points to the value of exploring patristic literature by Christian therapists treating Christian clients in a competent manner, which today means in accord with evidence-based practice. According to the APA task force (2006), even the most statistically robust evidence-based approaches employed with demonstrable clinical expertise does not constitute evidence-based practice without a consideration of the unique context presented by the client's characteristics, culture, and preferences. These important attributes are often tacit, yet have a powerful role in orienting the individuals to their problems and suggesting possible solutions. Among those attributes, even unelaborated religious convictions can be relevant with respect to many psychological difficulties stemming from emotional reactions and interpersonal relationships. Just as psychological theories can clarify many interconnections between environment, stressors, development, and behavior, so the church fathers can clarify the relationship between values, choices, and beliefs. When therapists serve Christian clients, recourse to the church fathers for the sake of more accurate conceptualization and more appropriate selection of interventions can make therapy increasingly evidence-based and hence responsible.

I feel quite grateful on a personal level to Dr. **George Stavros** for noting the vital connection between the patristic literature from the past and a patristic style of soul care that has continued unbroken from the apostolic era to the present day. Having lived for a decade in a monastery in the ancient monastic republic of the Holy Mountain, I can attest to the power and relevance of that kind of soul care. It was there in the Sacred Monastery of Karakallou on the Athonite peninsula that I would hear the fathers speaking at length about essentially two spiritual topics: the importance of the Jesus prayer and a special class of thoughts known as *logismoi*, which could motivate the monk to virtue if they were godly and to vice if they were passionate. Quite naturally, monks would study literature on how to make the Jesus prayer a part of their very being as well as how to cultivate edifying *logismoi* and reject spiritually harmful *logismoi*. They would also ask advanced monks and spiritual elders for advice based on experience about growing in these areas. Such was the living context of Athonite soul-care from which I began my exploration of cognitive therapy.

I agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Stavros's remark about the importance of the therapeutic

relationship. In chapter 6 of my *Ancient Christian Wisdom* (Trader, 2011/2012), I do compare and contrast cognitive therapists and spiritual fathers in their unique therapeutic settings, but I also think the relational, human aspects of both therapy and soul care demand further exploration. Certainly, the common factors operant in therapy—"relationship, alliance, myth and ritual, corrective experience, and insight" (Wampold, 2012, p. 445)—are also present in patristic care. By reading patristic texts that bear witness to these factors, such as the conversations in the desert fathers or the letters of Saints to their spiritual children, it is possible to highlight uniquely Christian ways in which the spiritual, therapeutic relationship is cemented by participation in the Christian virtues of humility, meekness, and love.

Dr. **George Stavros** is quite right that the next logical step is to document case vignettes employing patristic interventions and literature. This makes Dr. Clarke's contribution of a small case study using patristic literature in the context of conventional cognitive therapy quite precious, for it takes the proposition of a patristic-cognitive alliance a step beyond the anecdotal. If clinicians document and reflect on their experience of employing patristic interventions in the course of therapy, we can ask and begin to answer other important questions such as: Which patristic interventions are especially effective and why? What are patient characteristics that mesh well with good outcome measures? When would such interventions be contraindicated and for what reasons?

Dr. **Adam DeVille's** own professional concerns illustrate the breadth of applications for patristic sources and cognitive therapy even beyond the narrow clinical setting. He posits the question: "how can psychology be useful to Christians in broad 'ecclesial' healing, particularly the 'healing of memories' that the late Pope John Paul II so often advocated?" which he later reframes as "Is it possible to find means, both in modern psychology and ancient patristic wisdom, to heal these wounds in the very Body of Christ *as a whole*?" These are wonderful practical questions, and by virtue of a certain inherent pragmatism in modern psychological and ancient pastoral approaches, we would expect both approaches to contribute valuable answers.

Before turning to some of those contributions, however, I would prefer to rephrase those questions, because I feel somewhat uncomfortable with the metaphor regarding the wounds on the Body of Christ requiring healing or the Church needing therapy, for I understand Christ's life-giving wounds and His Holy Church, the ark of salvation, as themselves the primary sources for health and wholeness in the world. In fact, the Biblical and patristic word for salvation, *sotiria*, is etymologically derived from the word *sos*, which since the time of Homer has meant wholeness, safety, and health (Liddel & Scott, 1996). Those who are in need of healing are individual Christians, clergy and laity

alike, still bound to sin and far from having the compassion of Christ for all peoples regardless of whether they “are with us.” Those individuals may be in the Church, but they do not define the Church. From an incarnational perspective, the Church can be defined as the extension of Christ Himself Who heals, but needs no healing. For the sake of definitional consistency, I prefer to avoid speaking about the Church being healed. I would, however, be glad to offer some preliminary thoughts about the following reformulation of DeVille’s question: “Can psychological and patristic approaches help groups of Christians to forgive and to desist from holding on to resentment for historical transgressions by other groups of Christians?”

To the above question, my answer would be a most emphatic yes. In terms of assistance from psychology, cognitive therapy seeks to correct maladaptive behavior and emotional reactions by curtailing underlying thinking errors and maladaptive schemata instrumental in maintaining such behaviors and reactions. The sociohistorical remembrance of wrongs can certainly become pathological through the influence of cognitive distortions, such as magnification, disqualifying the positive, overgeneralization, and personalization. As an approach to interpersonal relations, this remembrance of wrongs is clearly a maladaptive strategy, especially given the correlation between resentment, poor health, and psychopathology (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2011).

So how can such maladaptive strategies be modified? Cognitive theory suggests reframing the meaning that one gives to the actions of others and also to one’s own condition as a result of those actions. In the case of remembrance of historical wrongs, it would be good for Christians to set aside a *Weltanschauung* of victimhood and insular individualism and instead embrace a worldview of responsibility and interconnectedness that values others. It is also helpful to attribute actions to contexts, rather than to malevolence (Hong & Jacinto, 2012), as well as to reflect on recent, positive experiences and accomplishments, rather than on past, negative interactions.

In general, the executive functions operative in metacognition need to be called upon in order to learn to forgive (Pronk, 2010). It should be noted, however, that executive functions demand a higher level of mental energy. Forgiveness requires hard work and much patience, for the outcome of the forgiveness process is dependent on the effort made and the amount of time invested in it (Stratton, Nonneman, Bode, & Worthington, 2008). In terms of the mechanics of forgiveness, one of the more common psychological models for forgiveness, the REACH model, outlines the process as one of **R**ecall without rumination, **E**motional replacement with empathy, **A**ltruistic forgiveness, **C**ommitment to forgiveness, and **H**olding on to forgiveness (Worthington, Davis, Hook, Miller, Gartner, &

Jennings, 2011).

Can an awareness of cognitive distortions, disconnected individualism, and a worldview of victimhood together with reflection on positive experiences, accomplishments, and the REACH model be translated from an interpersonal framework to an intergroup setting? I believe it is possible, but there is reason for caution about isolated gestures. Official apologies, for example, are well meaning, but not effective until the offended group rejects a victim worldview, which can prevent the offended group from viewing the apology as sincere (Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012).

In terms of assistance from patristic teachings, the fathers’ counsel on forgiveness can do much to correct victim-oriented and individualistic worldviews that maintain resentment. Potential passages on this topic are as plentiful as the sand of the sea. By way of example, Saint John Chrysostom notes that in forgiving others, we primarily benefit ourselves, and he encourages us to engage in the metacognitive process of wiping out the remembrance of past wrongs from our mind even as Christ has blotted out the handwriting of our sins.³ Saint Maximus the Confessor suggests that those who are resentful pray for the persons they resent and that those who are resented strive to be humble and pleasant around those who resent them.⁴ Saint Augustine points out that Christ was both “Victor and Victim and the Victor as being the Victim,”⁵ an observation that could positively reframe Christian understanding of what it means to be a victim, not only historically, but also theologically. Reflection on such passages could certainly be used in conjunction with the above psychological approaches to help pave the way for Christians becoming more forgiving and compassionate with one another.

With respect to the utility of the embroidery and the integrity of the yarn, I believe the comments of my kind interlocutors leave us with two concluding thoughts. First, within manifest limitations, yet with untold possibilities, patristic literature embroidered onto cognitive therapy can offer Christian therapists another useful tool that is also a thing of beauty to behold. Second, while patristic literature has intrinsic value, utility, and beauty in its own right that must be zealously protected in order to preserve its prophetic voice vis-à-vis psychological theory and practice, it does not seem unfitting for it also to take on the “form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7, KJV) out of compassion for those who are suffering, becoming all things to all people, that it might by all means save some (1 Cor. 9:22, KJV).

Notes

¹ I understand DeVille’s objection to the consumerist connotations of the term *client*, but I would also point out that many rightly prefer it to the term *patient*, because the former term stresses the active role that the person takes in the process of healing and the assumption of

personal responsibility (Lloyd et al., 2001). Carl Rodgers also preferred the term *client*, because it avoided connotations of sickness (Goodyear & Parish, 1978).

² Saint Augustine *Confessiones* 8.12.29 PL 32.762 (Migne, 1844–64).

³ Saint John Chrysostom *Commentarius in Sanctum Joannem* 39.4 PG 59.228 (Migne, 1857–66).

⁴ Saint Maximus the Confessor *Capita de Charitate* 3.90 PG 90.1041d (Migne, 1857–66).

⁵ Saint Augustine *Confessiones* 10.43.69 PL 32.808 (Migne, 1844–64).

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Perception of the Logoi and Cure of the Soul in St. Maximus the Confessor

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St. Maximus the Confessor describes the several stages of ascetical discipline necessary for the cure of the soul culminating in its release from the passions. Central to an otherwise traditional program is his unique theory of the logoi, the principles or ideas by which the divine Logos created all things. Integral to his ascetical method is the soul's progress in virtue to dispassion and on to the contemplation of the logoi. Because the illness of the soul not only disorders human desires but also darkens the mind, the cure of the soul makes possible a more objective perception of reality. Contemplation of the logoi perfects that perception by allowing one to see Christ in all things and all things in Christ.

There is no greater disaster in the spiritual life than to be immersed in unreality.

-Merton (1958, p. 1)

But we have the mind of Christ.

-1 Corinthians 2.16

St. Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580-622) was a Byzantine monk and theologian who gained the epithet of "Confessor" for losing his life in defense of Orthodoxy during the Christological controversies of the 7th century. He was the towering theological figure of his times. His thinking and writings reveal a broad grasp of the entire Eastern Christian tradition up to his day, which he worked into a synthesis of great subtlety and beauty. All subsequent Byzantine and Orthodox theologians are indebted to Maximus's work, and as his writings have been translated into modern languages over the past few decades, many in the West have come to appreciate him as well.

Maximus's life and times, as well as his background in the Eastern monastic tradition, mean that he dealt with many issues that are of interest to contemporary psychologists, therapists, and spiritual directors. He refuted the false cosmology of Origen which was circulating in his time, a cosmology that taught the pre-existence of souls and a fall into matter. As part of his refutation, he wrote extensively on the theological and Christological aspects of creation, creation's role in the scheme of salvation, and the centrality of man in the created order. As an heir and major contributor to the monastic tradition, his writings are filled with observations on anthropology: the classification of the passions (vices), their relations to the various aspects of the soul and to each other, the means to their cure, and the soul's relationship to God. As a man actively engaged in the theological debates of his day – whether Christ had a divine will and a human will, only a divine will, or a synthetic will somehow made up of the two – he dealt comprehensively with what is natural and personal in human volition. And lastly, as a witness to Christ who had his right hand cut off for writing the truth and his tongue cut out for speaking it, and who

endured harsh exile in his old age (which broke his health and led to his death), his confession of Christ makes him a challenging and even an attractive figure to Christians today. Admittedly his writings can at times be difficult; nevertheless our study of them can bear copious theoretical and spiritual fruit.

My focus in this article is Maximus' understanding of how the human person perceives reality. We will start with examining two issues that are of immediate application to therapists and spiritual directors alike: the problems that arise from an impure mind (the life of sin) and the mind's purification (asceticism). This will give us a practical introduction to our overall theme: an examination of Maximus' cosmology and epistemology. Central to Maximus's cosmology is his theory of the *Logos* in the *logoi* of creation. This represents one of the Confessor's unique contributions to the subject and helps us understand his epistemology. To talk about perception in any of the Fathers of the Church is to talk about the human mind and its relationship both to God and to the world. Obviously a full consideration of Maximus's epistemology is beyond the scope of this paper; however, we can say a few things about it that are of interest to clinicians and pastors alike. We will look at how Maximus understands the soul, the mind, and the reason both in themselves and relative to each other. What is perceived, the "how" of perception and the subject who perceives, all arise within the context of the ascetical question with which we began. It is to this question that we will return, hopefully with deeper appreciation and insight, in our conclusion. For Maximus, the perception of reality requires that we first be healed of our sin by divine grace and our own cooperative effort. It is only then that we can transcend the merely empirical and, having acquired the mind of Christ, see reality in its moral and sacramental fullness.

The movement of our analysis will be this: Beginning with the common struggle of fallen humanity and its ascetical cure, we will consider the cosmology and anthropology that underlies

Maximus' soteriology. We will conclude by returning once again to the existential dimension now with an eye to helping understand that whatever the strengths and limitations of our hermeneutical lens, what matters most is the eye of the soul that gazes through it. "The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness" (Luke 11.34).

Finally, in what follows, we will try to rely upon the generally available works of the Confessor so that anyone who would like to read further in his writings might find it a little easier to know where to begin.¹

The Therapeutic Task: Distorted Perception and its Cure.

To speak of creation in Maximus's terms is to acknowledge that the world was created through the Word of God, the divine *Logos* (See John 1:1-2 as well as passages such as Ps 33:9 and Is 55:11), and that the Word made all things by means of certain *logoi* ("words," "reasons," "definitions" or "principles") that come from Him. These *logoi* are the definition of what a thing is. Maximus often speaks of the principles of a thing's nature (its *logos physeos*, in Greek); being the very definition of a thing, it cannot be corrupted by the Fall (otherwise a person or thing would cease to be what it is). However, the way in which a particular person or thing lives out that *logos* is subject to variation, and given the Fall, the manner or mode of existence (*tropos hyparxeos*) for all creatures has become unstable, disordered, and corrupted. This raises a very difficult question that does not admit a quick or easy answer. Free will existed before the Fall as a faculty of human nature, but afterwards, the personal, hypostatic expression of that natural free will is subject to a wavering hesitation (which Maximus calls *gnōmē*), compounded by ignorance of what is the real good to be chosen. In *Letter Two, On Love* (hereafter *Letter 2*, Louth, 1996, p. 87), Maximus says that nature is divided "at the level of mode of existence, fragmenting it into a multitude of opinions and imaginations." Thus the original harmony and unity of mankind, as well as his relationship with God (and the rest of the created order), is shattered. The fundamental, psychological cause of the Fall is man's sinful self-love, egoism (in Greek, *philautia*), which cut mankind off from God and cause divisions among persons. While Maximus acknowledges the Devil as the seducer of mankind and the engineer of all the means by which mankind looks to find pleasure and avoid pain, at the same time and in all of this, the human person cooperates with the Devil to his own destruction (Thunberg, 1985, pp. 56-57).

In *Letter 2*, Maximus describes the corruption of the human soul that resulted from the Fall. He says,

Thus humankind has brought into being from itself the three greatest, primordial evils, and (to speak simply) the begetters of all vice: *ignorance*, I mean, and *self-love* and *tyranny*, which are interdependent

and established one to the other. For out of ignorance concerning God, there arises self-love. And out of this comes tyranny toward one's kin: of this, there is no doubt. For the misuse of our own powers – reason, desire and the incensive power – these evils are established (quoted in Louth, 1996, p. 87, italics added).

In this way, then, are the three main faculties of the soul turned aside from their proper end and corrupted. "For reason, instead of being ignorant, ought to be moved through knowledge to seek solely after God; and desire [the concupiscible], pure of the passion of self-love, ought to be driven by yearning for God alone; and the incensive [irascible] power, separated from tyranny, to struggle to attain God alone" (Louth, 1996, p. 87). Alas, in the fallen person, the three main faculties of the soul are not moved to their proper ends and so from their corruption every other kind of vice (and physical and psychological pathology) proceeds.

Maximus sees self-love as "the mother of vices," for "the one who has self-love has all the passions."² Because self-love cuts mankind off from God and cause divisions among persons, it is clearly opposed to the two great commandments of love of God and love of neighbor. "Do not be a pleaser of self and you will not hate your brother. Do not be a lover of self and you will love God," he says in the *Fourth Century on Charity* (4.7). Several texts further, he speaks more clearly about the healing efficacy of love,

The love of God is opposed to lust, for it persuades the mind to abstain from pleasures. Love of neighbor is opposed to anger, for it makes it disdain fame and money. These are the two silver pieces which the Savior gave to the innkeeper, so that he could take care of you. Now do not show yourself senseless by joining up with the robbers, lest you be beaten up once again, and be found not to be half-dead but completely dead (*Char* 4.75).

Since lust is the corruption of the concupiscible part of the soul, love of God is its health. Likewise, as anger is the corruption of the irascible part, love of neighbor is its health. In this way, love properly directed toward God and neighbor, as the two great commandments require, effect the cure of the soul and free it from self-love. Indeed, love alone is able to lead a person freely to submit to God's creative will and purpose for him (expressed in the *logos* of human nature) and strive to conform to it (Louth, 1996, p. 86-87).

How then do we move from self-love to love of God and neighbor and so cure the soul? And how is this cure related to the perception of the *logoi*? Both are accomplished through the progress mentioned in passing above, by living lives of spiritual integrity. In classical Christian terms this means diligently working through the three stages of the spiritual life (purification, illumination, and union with God) or what Maximus calls practice, natural contemplation, and theological mystagogy; in short, through asceticism.³

Asceticism comes from the Greek *askēsis*, which simply means “exercise.” Asceticism, therefore, is simply spiritual exercise or discipline undertaken for the health of the soul. Here, we must be careful to set aside popular caricatures of asceticism as either a kind of masochistic, self-flagellated misery or a kind of Gnostic attitude which exalts lofty spiritual things over crass material things.⁴ It is neither. Rather, asceticism is a positive, life-affirming attitude and set of practices which seeks human freedom by overcoming the passions and uniting the person to Christ.

At the very beginning of the *Centuries on Charity* (hereafter *Char*, see Berthold, 1985, p. 36), Maximus lays out briefly a program of ascetical discipline that accomplishes, through love, what we have described:

1. Love is a good disposition of the soul in which one prefers no being to the knowledge of God. It is impossible to reach the habit of this love if one has any attachment to earthly things.

2. Love is begotten of detachment, detachment of hope in God, hope of patient endurance and long suffering, these of general self-mastery, self-mastery of fear of God, and fear of faith in the Lord.

3. The one who believes the Lord fears punishment; the one who fears punishment becomes a master of his passions; the one who becomes master of his passions patiently endures tribulations; the one who patiently endures tribulations will have hope in God; hope in God separates from every earthly attachment; and when the mind is separated from this it will have love for God.

4. The one who loves God prefers knowledge of him to all things made by him and is constantly devoted to it by desire (*Char* 1.1-4).

Structurally, these texts form an inclusion: the first and the fourth are concerned with love for God and detachment from earthly things, while the second and third described the steps necessary to arrive at this condition. Text 2 describes the steps in reverse order, beginning with the summit of love and proceeding backwards through the steps to the first one, faith. Text 3 begins with the first step, faith, and proceeds forward to love. Thus, in Maximus’s schema, the stages of ascetic spiritual development are seven: (1) faith, (2) fear of God, (3) self-restraint, (4) patience, (5) hope, (6) dispassion, and (7) love.

The beginning of ascetical discipline, as we have said, is what Maximus calls *practice* (from the Greek *praxis*). Everyone begins here. It is the stage where we practice the virtues so as to become proficient in them and so that they become habitual for us. The reason for practicing the virtues is to be freed from the passions for which the virtues correspond as an antidote. That is why the penultimate stage in Maximus’s system is *dispassion*, or freedom from the passions, which ushers in love, as Text 1 above says.

Practice begins with *faith*,⁵ “the foundation of everything which comes after it” (*Letter 2*) and which is both an intellectual and a voluntary act; it is both something we know and something we do. It

stabilizes the mind on various certainties or truths, and at the same time, it stabilizes the will on various virtues.

As faith progresses and gains in strength, it leads to *fear of God*, because we have to know God before we can fear him. At first, the fear of God manifests as fear of punishment for sin, but as faith and fear progress together, servile fear matures into a fear of offending God and losing His blessings. Fear of God thus opens the heart up to *repentance*, which is concerned with the past, and to *self-control* (the fourth stage), which guards the heart in the present.

Self-control overcomes the impulses of the body and the emotions (the lower faculties of the soul) that drag down the mind. It also involves guarding one’s thoughts against the seductive lure of the passions. Self-control is not a complete turning away from the world for God’s sake, but rather a turning away from the egotistical or self-aggrandizing view of the world that characterizes self-love.

Practicing self-control leads to *patience*. Maximus says that God leads us to perfection in two ways: we are drawn up in a positive way through providence by all of God’s goodness, and we are punished for sin and deprived of happiness through judgment to urge us to perfection. The way of providence is open to our personal initiative when we work on our spiritual development. The way of judgment is imposed upon those who neglect it.⁶

Moreover, the previous stage, self-control (including guarding of thoughts), is usually carried out while we are alone, and it is concerned primarily with uprooting those passions that corrupt desire, that is the concupiscible part of the soul, e.g., gluttony, lust, envy, listlessness, and vainglory. But the present stage, patience, is usually practiced in the face of dissatisfactions caused by other people and the circumstances of life, and it is concerned primarily with uprooting those passions that corrupt the irascible part of the soul, e.g., grief, impatience and anger.

Growth in patience gives rise to *hope*. As repentance is concerned with the past and self-control with the present, hope is oriented toward the future and the promises of Christ. As hope matures, the whole soul arrives at *dispassion*. This is a peaceful condition of the soul in which the passions have been largely stilled. Dispassion is not a kind of neutral state, but the possession of virtue, and it is a condition that must be sustained by the will, for it is possible through negligence to fall back into the passions. The stage of dispassion is important, because only the dispassionate person can see things objectively, as they are, without the distortion introduced by various passions.⁷

In this way, what Maximus calls *practice* in the active life leads gradually through prudent, virtuous behavior to an increased clarity of knowledge in the contemplative life:

The mind that has succeeded in the active life advances in prudence; the one in the contemplative

life, in knowledge. For to the former it pertains to bring the one who struggles to a discernment of virtue and vice, while to the latter, to lead the sharer to the principles [*logoi*] of incorporeal and corporeal things. Then at length it is deemed worthy of the grace of theology when on the wings of love it is passed beyond all the preceding realities, and being in God it will consider the essence of himself through the Spirit, in so far as it is possible to the human mind (*Char* 2.26).⁸

Or, more briefly put, “The mind functions according to nature when it keeps the passions subject, when it contemplates the principles [*logoi*] of beings, and when it dwells in God’s presence” (*Char* 4.44). Thus contemplation, or more specifically what Maximus calls the natural contemplation (*theōria physikē*) of visible and invisible realities (*Char* 1.97), brings us back to the perception of the *logoi* of things.

Natural contemplation is founded upon the basis of ascetical effort undertaken in the practical life. In fact, as Maximus writes in his *Centuries on Various Texts* (see *Philokalia* vol. 2, p. 205), there is clear danger in neglecting moral formation in virtue:

We should abstain from natural contemplation until we are fully prepared [through asceticism and the cultivation of virtue], lest in trying to perceive the spiritual essences [*logoi*] of visible creatures we reap passions by mistake. For the outward forms of visible things have greater power over the senses of those who are immature than the essences [*logoi*] hidden in the forms of things have over their souls.⁹

The danger, then, is that immature or immoral persons are easily distracted by their senses, which in turn leads them into passions, and from there into a distorted view of reality and a passionate misuse of others and the world to satisfy their disordered desires. This is the very situation which gives rise to ignorance of God and abuse of our neighbor; it is the fallen state of mankind. The active practice of asceticism and the cultivation of the virtues are therefore necessary, not only as a restraint on the passions and as part of the disciplined effort of uprooting them and their pernicious effects, but also because asceticism blossoms into contemplation. Contemplation flourishes in the state of dispassion (*apatheia*), a state not of apathy, as the Greek term might imply, but rather one of interior freedom, the calm of detachment, in which the passions are quieted and no longer have free reign in the soul. Inner freedom opens up the possibility of loving God, our neighbor and the rest of creation in a respectful, non-possessive, disinterested way. And it leads to genuine knowledge:

The reward for the labors of virtue is detachment and knowledge. For these become our patrons in the kingdom of heaven just as the passions and ignorance are the patrons of eternal punishment. Thus the one who seeks these out of human glory and not for their own good should hear the Scripture, “You ask but do not receive because you ask wrongly” (*Char* 2.34).

The practical life of asceticism is thus the

stabilization and reintegration of people’s lives according to God’s intention for them. Asceticism brings a person’s manner of life into conformity with their own *logos*, or to use a more contemporary term, asceticism helps them realize their own, personal, vocation and become their true self. Once this stability and reintegration begins to be manifest, natural contemplation becomes possible.

Natural contemplation requires the attentiveness of dispassion so that the mind, stripped free of the passions, is able to see persons and things not simply as they are in themselves (or, worse, as I want them to be), but rather as God intends them to be. Stripped of what we might call today a merely sentimental view of reality, I am able to see things as they actually are and as God would have them be. This perception of the *logoi*, which includes a scientific (*epistēmōnikōs*) investigation of the phenomenal world, matures in its latter stages into an intuitive grasp of the inner principles (*logoi*) of everyone and everything and ultimately of their unity in the one Logos of God. That is, natural contemplation proceeds from seeing God in creation to seeing creation in God. Alas, Maximus nowhere gives a description of exactly how the mind grasps the *logoi* of things, but because we know that it is a function of the mind and not of the reason, we can be certain it is not through discursive thought or deductive reasoning. Rather, it is an act of intuition. And because it is oriented toward the knowledge of God, it takes place “in the Spirit,” as the Confessor says. This means that for the therapist and spiritual director, their relationship with the client or the directee proceeds from seeing Christ in my neighbor to seeing my neighbor in Christ.¹⁰ Maximus puts this in explicitly Christological terms:

The mystery of the Incarnation of the Word bears the power of all the hidden meanings and figures of Scripture as well as the knowledge of visible and intelligible creatures. The one who knows the mystery of the cross and the tomb knows the principles [*logoi*] of these creatures. And the one who has been initiated into the ineffable power of the Resurrection knows the purpose for which God originally made all things (*Theological and Economic Centuries*, hereafter *TheOec* 1.66, Berthold, 1995, pp. 139-140).

Ultimately, the virtues acquired by the faculty of reason in the active life and the knowledge acquired by the mind in the contemplative life are stabilized by love. The stabilization of love is necessary because, in our fallen state, “it is normal that presumption and envy follow upon knowledge, especially in the beginning... thus it is necessary for the one who has knowledge to take hold of love in order to keep his mind from any kind of wound” (*Char* 4.61).

Such, then, is a brief sketch of Maximus’s view of the corruption of the soul and the means to its cure. In order better to understand his view, we will need to lay out in more detail some of the aspects of his thought that undergirds his concept of corruption and cure and that have been treated only

in passing. That is, we need to say something more about his cosmology, in particular his theory of the *logoi* of things, as well as flesh out a few aspects of his anthropology.

The First Incarnation of Christ: Seeing the Logoi of Creation

As the Prologue of John's Gospel says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1, 3). Maximus developed more than any Christian writer before him the notion that the Word, the Logos, made all things by means of certain *logoi* ("words," "reasons," or "principles") that come from Him. These *logoi* are the *ideas* and *wills* of God by which He creates everything and imparts to everything its unique characteristics. Maximus does not understand the *logoi* to be a collection of ideal Platonic forms in the mind of God, nor should we understand the Logos Himself to be a kind of divine reservoir full of *logoi* waiting to burst forth into creation. On the contrary, the Logos remains one, simple and uncompounded, as befits divinity. The act of creation itself is the differentiation of the *logoi*, which become multiple in creation while remaining one and simple in the divine Logos.

C.S. Lewis (as cited in Törönen, 2007, pp. 128-129) captures well the idea here with a homely illustration. "The *logoi* are God's ideas or plans for the creatures, and when realized they seem to be like things coming out of "God's head," as in the "Creation Song" of the Lion Aslan described in this passage of a well-known children's tale:

All this time the Lion's song, and his stately prow, to and fro, backwards and forwards, was going on.... Polly was finding the song more and more interesting because she thought she was beginning to see the connection between the music and the things that were happening. When a line of dark firs sprang up on a ridge about a hundred yards away she felt that they were connected with a series of deep, prolonged notes which the Lion had sung a second before. And when he burst into a rapid series of lighter notes she was not surprised to see primroses suddenly appearing in every direction. Thus, with an unspeakable thrill, she felt quite certain that all the things were coming (as she said) "out of the Lion's head". When you listened to his song you heard the things he was making up; when you looked round you, you saw them.¹¹

When God wills someone or something into existence, Polly for example, the *logos* of Polly is "spoken," or as Lewis says, "sung," by God, and Polly comes to be. The *logos* of Polly has three aspects. (1) It is the *cause* of her existence, for prior to God saying, "*fiat Polly*," there is literally, ontologically, no Polly to speak of. (2) It is the *principle* of Polly's being, or the definition of who she is according to nature—not merely a generic human being, but this particular

girl we call Polly. And (3) it also includes the divine *intention* or *purpose* for which God created Polly, her role in the divine plan and her ultimate salvation and union with God.

It is important not to think of the *logoi* as things that exist in themselves. They are not different from the divine Logos or from the creatures they cause and define. Rather they are simply *the immanence of the divine Wisdom, the Word of God, in created beings*. Because the Word/Logos of God is at the same time the cause and source of each of the *logoi* in creation when they come to be, the One who sustains them in existence, and the One Who is their ultimate purpose, the Logos is the unifying and all-embracing cosmic Presence, "everywhere present and filling all things," but Who is not embraced or circumscribed by anything. Maximus uses the parable from Matthew 13.31-32 to describe this relationship: "The Word of God is like a grain of mustard seed; before its cultivation it appears to be very small, but when it has been properly cultivated it shows itself to be so evidently big that the noble reasons [*logoi*] of creatures of sense and mind come as birds to rest in it. For the reasons [*logoi*] of all things are set in it [the Logos] as finite beings, but it is limited by none of these things" (*ThOec* 2.10, Berthold, 1985, pp. 149-150.).

The Confessor is, in fact, very bold and will go so far as to say that the Logos is embodied three times: in creation (through the *logoi*), in the Scriptures, and finally in the flesh in His incarnation as Jesus Christ.¹² As Lars Thunberg (1965, p. 82) points out,

This three-fold incarnation seems to be closely linked with Maximus' idea of three general laws in the world: natural law, written law, and the law of grace. Thus, in Maximus' view, the Logos, on account of his general will to incarnate himself, holds together not only the *logoi* of creation but also the three aspects of creation, revelation (illumination), and salvation.

Consequently, contemplation of the *logoi* in creation (*theōria physikē*) belongs to the work of the Spirit in man's sanctification and deification. This intellectual process is not separated from spiritual growth but is an integral part of it.¹³

Why is this notion of *logoi* important? As the *logoi* are God's very definition of reality, our perception and understanding of them is necessary if we are going to understand the world – and people – (1) as they really are, (2) as God intended them to be, and (3) the ways in which they fall short of that ideal. Maximus says, "The mind that has succeeded in the active life [through reason] advances in prudence; the one in the contemplative life [through the mind], in knowledge. For to the former it pertains to bring the one who struggles to a discernment of virtue and vice, while for the latter, to lead the sharer to the principles [*logoi*] of incorporeal and corporeal things" (*Char* 2.26). Thus, the perception of the *logoi* is a proper function of the mind. It is not a function of the reason, but reason, concerned as it is with prudential action, forms the necessary grounding in

virtue that contemplation of the *logoi* presupposes. In effect, I must be morally good in order that I might see the goodness of creation. We will return to this point below.

At the end of the first *Century on Charity* (Char 1.97-100, Berthold, 1985, p. 46), Maximus gives these texts:

97. The pure mind is found either in simple ideas of human things, or in the natural contemplation [*theōria physikē*] of visible realities, or in that of invisible realities, or in the light of the Holy Trinity.

98. The mind which is settled in the contemplation of visible realities searches out either the natural reasons [*logoi*] of things, or those which are signified by them, or else it seeks the cause itself [*i.e.*, God the Logos].

99. Dwelling in the contemplation of the invisible, it seeks both the natural reasons [*logoi*] of these things, the cause of their production, and whatever is consequent upon them, and also what is the providence and judgment concerning them.

100. Once it is in God, it is inflamed with desire [*pothos*] and seeks first of all the principles [*logoi*] of His being, but finds no satisfaction in what is proper to Himself, for that is impossible and forbidden to every created nature alike. But it does receive encouragement from His attributes, that is, from what concerns His eternity, infinity, and immensity, as well as from His goodness, wisdom, and power by which He creates, governs, and judges beings.

There are here several interrelated points that we can look at in turn. First is the notion of *natural contemplation*, which, as the Confessor says, is concerned with (1) visible realities, (2) invisible realities, or (3) with God. Contemplation consists of two stages. The latter stage and ultimate aim is union with God through pure prayer, which, as Text 100 points out, is borne of longing for God, but which necessarily falls short because no created being can comprehend God.¹⁴ The earlier stage of contemplation, however, is to come to a knowledge of creatures through the contemplation of their natures, that is, to perceive their *logoi*. Because the *logoi* are the presence of God in created beings, the discernment of the nature of things is, practically, a search for God through His immanence in the world and is therefore part of our sanctification.

In the earlier stage of natural contemplation, Maximus distinguishes contemplation of visible and invisible realities. Visible realities are the creatures of the physical world, including our bodies. Invisible realities include the aspects of the soul, that is, its higher faculties (reason, memory and will) and lower ones (the concupiscible and irascible),¹⁵ and what is consequent upon them. Thus, perception of the *logoi* of the invisible realities of the soul leads to a deeper understanding of the whole psycho-spiritual aspect of human persons, both as they are structured in and of themselves, and more importantly, how God intended them to function. To have a good understanding of visible and invisible realities

through natural contemplation is to arrive at *discretion* or discernment.

Maximus describes what discretion consists of in a passage where he explains what it means “to grope after and discover God” (Acts 17:27). He says,

He who “gropes after God” properly has discretion [*diakrisis*]. Therefore, he who comes upon the [Scriptures’] symbols intellectually [*gnōstikōs*], and who contemplates the phenomenal nature of created things scientifically [*epistēmōnikos*], discriminates within scripture, creation, and himself. He distinguishes, that is, between the letter [*gramma*] and the spirit [*pneuma*] in scripture, between the inner principle [*logos*] and the outward appearance [*epiphaneia*] in creation, and between the intellect [*nous*] and sense [*aesthēsis*] in himself, and in turn unites his own intellect indissolubly with the spirit of scripture and the inner principle of creation. Having done this, he “discovers God.” For he recognizes, as is necessary and possible, that God is in the mind, and in the inner principle, and in the spirit; yet he is fully removed from everything misleading, everything that drags the mind down into countless opinions, in other words, the letter [of Scripture], the appearance [of creation], and his own sense.... If someone mingles and confuses the letter of the [Scripture], the outward appearance of visible things, and his own sense with one another, he “is blind and short-sighted” (2 Pet 1:9) and suffers from ignorance of the true Cause of created beings.¹⁶

What this means is that someone who does not rise to the fullness of Scriptural understanding—to the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures—but relies on the letter alone, will suffer in his understanding of creation and in the progress of his spiritual life. Similarly, someone who does not transcend the outward appearance of created things will suffer in his understanding of Scripture and stumble in his spiritual progress. Finally, someone who does not make progress in his spiritual life will suffer in his understanding of creation and of the Scriptures.

The implications for therapists and spiritual directors are clear: those who would rightly understand the human person—even through intellectual and scientific investigation of the psyche—cannot rest with phenomenal appearances or sense impressions only, but must penetrate the outward appearances of human physiology and psychology and discern the *logoi* inherent in human being. They must also rightly understand the Scriptures, getting beyond the letter to its spiritual meaning; and they must live lives of spiritual integrity, which in Orthodox terms, means diligently working through the classical stages of purification, illumination and toward an ever deeper personal union with God. These are all necessary and interrelated because all three are rooted in, and strive toward the Word of God, Who, being both their ground and their goal, unites them all in Himself. Failure to discern the *logoi* of creation results in a stunted view of the human person. A mind not fixed in Christ remains unilluminated and is a mind that is

“dragged down” into countless opinions and suffers in confusion about the true identity of a person, that is, who that person is—or should be—in Christ. Moreover, neglecting spiritual progress means living in bondage to sin (the passionate life, more on this below), where appetite is not subject to reason, where reason is not subject to the mind fixed in Christ, and where neglect or abuse of God, neighbor, and creation become all too common.

This is enough from Maximus’s cosmology and his theory of *logoi* to undergird our discussion. To conclude, we need to narrow our focus again and look at a few aspects of his anthropology.

Maximus’s Anthropology Briefly Considered: Who Perceives.

In the early centuries of the Church, there developed a broad consensus on anthropology. Maximus is a part of that consensus, and we will summarize parts of it here.¹⁷ The patristic consensus affirms that a human person is a composite of body and soul, or following St. Paul, a trichotomy of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23: “may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”). That we have a physical body need not detain us. What of the spirit and the soul?

The Fathers took up the distinction of the faculties of the soul from Plato and Aristotle, but reinterpreted them in a Christian way and gave them added meaning and depth. The soul is divided into higher and lower faculties. There are two lower faculties, where the emotions reside: *epithymia* (the *desiring* or *concupiscible* aspect of the soul), which is inwardly directed or self-focused; and *thymos* (the *irascible* or *incensive* aspect), which is outwardly focused. When it functions properly, the desiring aspect of the soul wants what is good and temperate; when it is corrupted, desire manifests as greed, lust, envy, and the like. The proper functioning of the incensive part of the soul is courage and gallantry; when corrupted, it manifests as impatience, aggression and anger.

When the faculties of the soul are not functioning properly, and are chronically corrupted and sinful, they are said to be passionate. *Passion* is a stable, enduring disorder of the soul, a sinful habit or attitude that poisons our relationships, primarily with God, but also with ourselves, our neighbor, and the world. As Maximus describes it, “passion is a movement of the soul contrary to nature either toward irrational love or senseless hate of something or on account of something material” (*Char* 1.14). As the Greek term *pathē* and the Latin term *passio* imply, passions are something that the soul *suffers*, something before which a person becomes passive, and potentially a slave. They are ultimately the fruit of Adam’s fall and the corruption which came with it and give rise to St. Paul’s lament, “For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind

and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom 7:22-24).

Maximus does acknowledge that there are natural passions inherent in the soul that relate to the vital functions of the body and conserve life. Hunger, pleasure, fear, and sadness are not of themselves sinful and of these, he says, they

become good in those who struggle when, wisely unfastening them from the things of the flesh, use them to gain heavenly things. For example, they can change appetite [hunger] into the movement of a spiritual longing for divine things; pleasure, into pure joy for the cooperation of the mind with divine gifts; fear, into care to evade future misfortune due to sin; and sadness, into corrective repentance for present evil.¹⁸

However, for our purposes, we will use the term “passion” in the sinful sense. In this way, the passions are equivalent to the “seven deadly sins” of classical spirituality that enslave the heart, cloud the reason, lead to the disintegration and corruption of the soul, and, by extension, to the misery of the world caused by corrupted people acting in corrupted ways.¹⁹ The categories of contemporary psychopathology are the modern, secular classifications for the passions.

To cite a few pertinent lines from Maximus from the first *Century on Charity* (*Char* 1.64-67, Berthold, 1985, p. 42),

64. Some of the passions are of the body, some of the soul. Those of the body take their origin in the body; those of the soul from exterior things. Love [charity] and self-control cut away both of them, the former [charity] those of the soul, the latter [self-control] those of the body.

65. Some of the passions belong to the irascible, some to the concupiscible part of the soul. Both are moved by means of the senses; and they are moved whenever the soul is found outside of love and self-control.

66. It happens that the passions of the irascible part of the soul are harder to combat than those of the concupiscible. Thus it is that a better remedy for it was given by the Lord: the commandment of love.

67. All the other passions lay hold of either the irascible or the concupiscible parts of the soul only, or even of the rational part, as forgetfulness or ignorance. But sloth, by grasping onto all the souls powers, excites nearly all of them together. In this way it is the most troublesome of all the passions. Well, then, did the Lord tell us in giving the remedy against it, “In your patience possess your souls” [Lk 21:19].

If the emotions reside in the lower faculties of the soul, the higher faculties, or the rational aspect of the soul, includes the intellect/mind, reason, memory, and will. As the last of the texts quoted above says, the corruption of the rational part includes forgetfulness and ignorance (as well as pride), it follows that attentiveness, knowledge, and humility show that the rational part is healthy.

The *intellect* or *mind* (in Greek, *nous*) is sometimes taken to mean the whole soul, broadly speaking, but more properly, it is identified as the highest faculty of the soul. It is what is most personal, individual and unique, in us. It is the thinking subject in us, our self, the “I” who says, “I like coffee”; or, better yet, it is our spiritual subject. In patristic anthropology, it came to substitute for the Pauline term *spirit* and is identified with the *person* (in Greek, *hypostasis*),²⁰ as distinct from all that can be classified as part of human *nature*. Maximus calls the *nous* the “inner man” (*Char* 4.50). We might simply call it consciousness. It is the locus of responsibility, of the unity of the personality, and of the image of God in us: “Taking a body from already existing matter and breathing life into it from Himself (Gen 2:7), the Word fashioned an intellectual soul (*noeran psychēn*) made in the image of God (*eikona Theou*).”²¹ It is the faculty by which the whole person is able to be oriented toward God in freedom but which gives consent to sin.²² Consequently, for better and for worse, it is the chief faculty in our psycho-spiritual formation.²³

It is important that we clearly distinguish the mind (*nous*) from the faculty of reason (*logos*) which it employs. It is common nowadays to identify the mind with the faculty of reason, but they are not the same. The mind, being conscious, can apprehend some things directly, immediately (in the literal sense, that is, intuitively, without mediation of the senses or reason), but it also uses the physical organs of sense perception and employs the intellectual faculties of reason, memory, and will. It receives information from the faculties and directs them, but as we pointed out above, the mind, being personal, transcends nature and all the natural faculties of body and soul, including the faculty of reason.

Maximus distinguishes mind and reason eloquently in the fifth chapter of his work, the *Church's Mystagogy* (hereafter, *Myst*, Berthold, 1985, pp. 181-225). There, the Confessor says that the soul has an intellectual and a vital faculty (what we have called the higher and lower faculties of the soul). The mind he calls a *contemplative* (or *theoretical*) power that oversees the intellectual faculty, while reason is an *active* power that oversees the vital faculty. The mind is and is called *wisdom* when it directs its proper movements toward God, while the reason is and is called *prudence* when it unites the mind and the activities of the vital faculty and guides them in a reasonable direction. The mind, “is led to the *truth* by enduring and incomprehensible *knowledge*,” while reason, “ends up at the *good* by means of *faith* in the active engagement of its body in *virtue*” (Berthold, pp. 190-91, italics added). Here Maximus brings to mind the classical Christian distinction between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita practica*, the contemplative life and the active or practical life. The proper role of the mind is contemplative, oriented toward God, progressing in wisdom, and arriving at truth, while the proper role of the reason is active,

oriented toward the world, progressing in prudence and other virtues, and arriving at goodness. In short, the mind is concerned with eternal truths and unites us with God, while the reason is concerned with temporal matters and with applying the truths of wisdom to the economy of living.

In one respect, the Confessor says, does the reason *not* differ from the mind: it “bears the same divine image by *virtue* as does the mind [by *contemplation*]. This image... is naturally shared by both mind and reason as the soul was previously proven to consist of mind and reason, because it is intellectual and rational” (Berthold, 1985, pp. 190-191, italics added). That is to say, the image of God in man (the *imago Dei*, in Greek, *eikon Theou*) is found in *both* the mind and in the reason together (and, because the image of God is also living, it is also found in the vital faculty of the soul, as well).

The sum of Maximus's analysis is to arrive at a set of five pairs: “the mind and reason, wisdom and prudence, contemplation and action, knowledge and virtue, enduring knowledge and faith” (Berthold, 1985, p. 191). These pairs are all found under the rubric of a single pair, truth and goodness, which reveal God.

Every soul by the grace of the Holy Spirit and his own work and diligence can unite these [pairs] and weave them into each other... without any of these things being inferior or superior to the other in such a way that all excess or defect be eliminated from them. To summarize: It means to reduce the ten to one [pair, truth and goodness], when it [the soul] will be united to God who is true, good, one and unique. It will be beautiful and splendid (Berthold, p. 193).

Thus, mind and reason are distinguishable but inherent parts of the soul that cannot be separated since together they show the image of God in us. Still, because the reason oversees the lower faculties and the mind oversees the higher faculties of which reason is a part, reason is ultimately subservient to the mind.

Ultimately, the mind, made in the image of the one God, “is itself a monad which singly embraces the good as a unity” (Berthold, 1985, p. 193). Put slightly differently, the mind embraces the reason within itself as part of its own unity. And if progress is made in the pursuit of knowledge and good, and the soul draws near to God, “there is no reason to divide it on purpose into numerous things,” such as we have done in this analysis, “because its head is crowned by the first and only and unique Word and God.” That is to say, we have come to union with God.²⁴

Conclusion: Illness and the Cure of the Soul in Moral Universe

Maximus teaches that everything and every person is created by God according to His divine purpose, which is expressed in the *logos* of each creature. As a result of the Fall, the way in which

each person lives out his or her *logos* has become corrupted, and so unstable and disordered. The root of this corruption lies in sinful self-love, which shatters the original harmony and unity of mankind and the human person's relationship with God. The fruit of this corruption are the manifold passions to which we are subject, and ultimately death. Fundamentally it is through love, as expressed in the two great commandments to love God and our neighbor, that draws all the powers of the soul out of disorder, reintegrates them and reorients them toward their proper end in God. This task is accomplished through asceticism and progress through the stages of the spiritual life.

The ascetical task which we have described above begins in practical, exterior activities designed to uproot the passions—the cutting off of vice, the cultivation of virtue—and progresses through stages to dispassion, a state of virtue in which the passions are rendered quiet. This progress is accomplished not simply from our own effort but as the result of our cooperation with God's grace. As the synergistic work of grace and ascetical effort goes forward, it has its effect on the mind as well. The more the passions are quieted, the less they distort the mind's perception of reality, the more clearly the light of Christ shines in the soul. Practical asceticism thus blossoms into natural contemplation, an intuitive perception of the world in which we are able to perceive the *logoi* of things, their inner principles, the very intention God had when He made them. As contemplation of the *logoi* deepens, we come to perceive the unity of all things in Christ, Who is their author and goal, their Alpha and Omega (cf. Rev 1:8).

For those of us who are Christians in the helping professions, Maximus shows the way to care for our neighbor: it is to help him along the ascetical path, to help him overcome the passions which disorder his life and bring grief to himself and others, and to set him on the way to natural contemplation so that he can begin to perceive the *logoi* of things and his own place within the created order and ultimately to discern God's purpose for his life.

If our care is to be optimal, however, it is incumbent on us to tread the same ascetical path ourselves and make progress in it. We cannot be trustworthy guides if we are not familiar with the terrain, and our words will lack power if we attempt to urge others along a path we are unwilling to travel. But what is at issue is more than a matter of hypocrisy. As Maximus has shown, someone still in the clutches of his passions will suffer from a lack of self-control, irascibility, and a darkened mind, all of which leads him to perceive the world in a distorted way that is consistent with the disorders of his own soul. That is to say, a passionate person will care for others in a passionate way, and if the blind leads the blind, they both end up in the ditch (Lk 6:39). Schools of thought, hermeneutical lenses, and therapeutic techniques are all important, but they are insufficient, harmful even, if they are employed by

a passionate therapist. Thomas Merton's line which was quoted at the beginning of this article, "There is no greater disaster in the spiritual life than to be immersed in unreality" (Merton, 1958, p. 1), applies as much to the helper as to the helped.

The therapist, then, must be intentionally and seriously ascetical. He must overcome self-love and progress in love for God and for his neighbor and so begin to restore the health of his own soul. As he grows in virtue, in self-control and patience, the passions dry up and dispassion becomes a real possibility. And this is most important, for only the dispassionate person can see things, including his client, objectively, as God designed him to be.

But as Maximus points out, the greater our dispassion, the greater contemplation blossoms in us and the more we are illumined by the light of Christ. We put on the mind of Christ (see 1 Cor 2:16). Thus, virtue paves the way for knowledge, and the mind begins intuitively to perceive not only sensible things and one's client objectively, but more importantly, to perceive them more fully in the light of Christ. The perception of things in the light of Christ is natural contemplation, the perception of their *logoi*.

At this point, the therapist is able to transcend the empirical and practical level of encounter with a client and begin to see Christ in him and to see his client in Christ. Seeing Christ in another person through the discernment of the *logoi* that define him is not a matter of merely intellectual affirmation of the Gospel, much less is it an act of the imagination; it is an act of real knowledge that embraces, transcends, and transfigures what we know empirically. The same Word/Logos of God who made me rational (*logikos*) illumines me to see the other person whom He created rational (*logikos*) and to do so on the level of our *logoi*. (And for the more perfect, it is possible to see that both of us are one in Christ.) In this way, an authentic encounter between two persons cannot take place but in the presence of a third Person, Christ, who is there in the midst of them (Matt 18:20), and a soul cannot be cured apart from the moral progress of both the therapist and the client who walk the same path and share the same goal: union with Christ.

Notes

- ¹ The most accessible translations and collections of Maximus's writings in English include Sherwood (1955); Palmer, Sherrard, & Ware (1981); Berthold (1985). Other recent collections of Maximus's works translate some of his more difficult and speculative works and are not so accessible to the non-specialist.
- ² *Centuries on Charity* (hereafter *Char*), 1.59 in Berthold and 3.8. A "century" in patristic parlance refers to a collection of a hundred brief texts on a given subject. The texts were often brief or pithy and easily remembered (alas, not so often in Maximus's case). They were a popular form of monastic literature. Thus, there are 400

texts in the *Centuries on Charity* and 200 in the *Theological and Economic Centuries* (hereafter *ThOec*, where “economy” refers to the economy of salvation in Christ, not to the modern science of economics).

³ See, e.g. *ThOec* 2.94-96 in Berthold (1985). Maximus also characterizes the three stages in other terms, as, for example, the active life, the contemplative life, and theology (*Char* 2.26); virtue, spiritual contemplation and pure prayer (*Char* 3.44); or virtue, knowledge and theology (*ThOec* 1.16). They all amount to the same thing.

⁴ Orthodox asceticism must also be distinguished from Western, especially Roman Catholic, notions of penance or penitential discipline and satisfaction for sins. With regard to the caricature of asceticism, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae (2002, p. 25) notes, “According to the current use of the word, asceticism has a negative connotation. It means a negative holding back, a negative restraint, or a negative effort. This is because the sinful tendencies of our nature, the habitual things that lead to its death, have come to be considered as the positive side of life. Ascetical striving, though negative in appearance, confronts the negative element in human nature with the intent to eliminate it by permanent opposition.”

⁵ Maximus is not systematic in developing his seven stages, either in the *Centuries on Charity* or elsewhere. The various stages are commonplaces in the monastic literature of his day and were widely understood by his audience. A full elaboration is not possible here. The following description relies on Stăniloae’s (2002) analysis in pp. 69ff.

⁶ *Questions to Thalassios* 54.10 quoted in Stăniloae, (2002, p. 168); *ThOec* 2.95.

⁷ Here is the patristic antecedent of Husserl’s phenomenological “bracketing” (*epoché*) and the attempts at perception uncolored by subjectivity.

⁸ Note here the three stages of the spiritual life are called practice, contemplation, and theology.

⁹ Also *ThOec* 2.45, *Char* 4.57: “Once granted a partial knowledge of God, do not be careless about love and self-mastery, for these purify the passionate aspect of the soul and are ever preparing for you the way to knowledge.”

¹⁰ *Mystagogy* 23 (Berthold, 1985, p. 204). Also *ThOec* 2.33.

¹¹ Another contemporary, though less homely, expression of this idea is found in Pope Benedict XVI’s (2009) encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, 48, “...the natural environment is more than raw material to be manipulated at our pleasure; it is a wondrous work of the Creator containing a ‘grammar’ which sets for ends and criteria for its wise use, not its reckless exploitation.” This “grammar” is the *logoi* we are describing.

¹² See, e.g., *Ambiguum* 33, Migne, 1857-1866, *Patrologia cursus completus: Series graeca*, vol. 91, columns 1285C-1288A, and *Questions to Thalassius* 15, vol. 90, columns 297B-300A.

¹³ The discussion of the three laws is found in *Questions to Thalassius* 64, Migne, vol. 90, column 724C.

¹⁴ The degree of our union with God is, of course, a function of His condescension and grace for us.

¹⁵ It also includes angelic natures, but this subject is far beyond our scope.

¹⁶ *Question to Thalassius* 32 (CCSG 225.17-33), quoted in Blowers, 1991, pp. 100-101.

¹⁷ For those interested in the details of Maximus’s anthropology and where he differs specifically from this or that Father, the classical work remains Thunberg (1965).

¹⁸ *Questions to Thalassius* 1 (PG 90.269), cited in Stăniloae (2002, p. 85).

¹⁹ The classical list of the seven deadly sins in the West includes: lust, gluttony, avarice, discouragement/sloth, anger, envy and pride. In the Eastern Church, the passions traditionally number eight and are usually listed in the order Evagrius of Pontus gives them: gluttony, lust, avarice, grief, anger, listlessness, vainglory and pride. Any particular sin that can be named is rooted in one or more of these passions. Passions are to be distinguished from emotions. As Stăniloae (2002, p. 103) points out, “emotion is a primary and brute state, an instinctive movement, an abrupt and immediate reaction, while passion is a secondary and complex formation”. Passions tend to be chronic, stable, and habitual, as opposed to emotions, which are transient and episodic.

²⁰ This understanding gives an entirely new depth to notion of a *personal* relationship with Christ.

²¹ *Ambiguum* 7 (PG 91.1096A), quoted in Blowers and Wilkin (2003, p. 68).

²² *Char* 2.31, Berthold, 1985, p. 51: “From the passions embedded in the soul the demons take their starting place to stir up passionate thoughts in us. Then, by making war on the mind through them, they force it to go along and consent to sin.”

²³ “If we seek some approximate equivalents and modern psychology, the domain of the *nous* might be that explored by Frankel and the ‘existential psychologists’, for whom the unconscious reveals a spiritual dimension that points to God. The domain of the *thymos* [irascibility] would be more like Adler’s idea of the desire that is at the center of the unconscious, to assert oneself, to prove one’s worth. Finally *epithymia* [concupiscence] calls to mind the Freudian *libido*” (Clément, 1993, p. 134).

²⁴ Union with God is, in Eastern Christian understanding, the goal of Christian life and meaning of salvation. It is often called

divinization, deification, or (in Greek) *theōsis*. It is to become *by grace* what God is *by nature*.

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Finding the Fit: An Eastern Orthodox Approach to Pastoral Counseling

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The author presents pastoral counseling from an Eastern Orthodox perspective, which includes both science as well as noetic encounters with the uncreated energies of divine grace that evidence the presence of Christ. Pastoral counseling involves being present with and listening to others with the same ascetical sobriety, repentance, humility, and inner silence that one brings to God in prayer. The encounter is a reciprocal process affecting both counselor and client, ultimately becoming trialogical, when hearts “become flame” as on the Emmaus way. Healing and illumination by Christ, who appears in “between,” affects both client and counselor for whom therapy is part of a spiritual formation process.

A new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you.

—John 13:34

The most important problem for Orthodox theology will be to reconcile the cosmic vision of the Fathers with a vision which grows out of the results of the natural sciences... Theology today must remain open to embrace both humanity and the cosmos.

—Dumitru Staniloae (cited by Nesteruk, 2003, p. 6)

The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock. The gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him; they do not recognize the voice of strangers.

—John 10:2-5

The ancient Greek inventor Archimedes is said to have boasted, “Give me a fixed point and a lever long enough, and I can move the world.” When considering pastoral care and counseling from an Eastern Orthodox perspective, I begin with St. Gregory the Theologian’s dogmatic formulation of God’s co-suffering love for humanity in Christ: “Whatever has not been assumed cannot be healed.” This becomes our fixed point. The lever is the combined action of the uncreated divine energies of the Holy Trinity and the created energies of human persons working together synergistically in the call and response of trialogue¹ which not only “moves the world,” but transforms and redeems it as well. Humanity cannot be spiritually healed independently of God by any form of technique or humanly-derived science. Neither will God transform someone magically through communion without that person’s free assent and cooperation. Pastoral counseling is, therefore, a trialogue of love whose transformative power and meaning arises from Christ’s presence in “between” counselor and client, which ultimately changes both.

Existential and moral considerations

The pastoral counseling relationship involves psychological and existential dimensions related to freedom of choice in specific and unique circumstances, as well as a larger ontological dimension stemming from the personhood and truth of God in Christ. Together these dimensions constitute the arena of human struggle involving the possibility of *Theosis*² and Eucharistic Communion which result from the encounter of the uncreated Triune God and created humankind. Given the more expansive anthropological vision Jordan (2008) has suggested that “all psychotherapy is clinical theology,” psychology and medicine can reasonably be viewed as branches of applied theology and whatever methodologies are employed should always therefore involve “testing the spirits” to see if they match the immense potential for life that is offered humanity by Jesus Christ—lest pastoral counseling be reduced to mere medicine and psychotherapy which in and of themselves can at best help physically and psychologically, but are unable to rise above the normative ends of a fallen creation..

Browning, (1976) put forth a similar thesis when he suggested that there is a moral context to all acts of care. Whether in professional pastoral counseling or ordained pastoral ministry, there remains a need for a theological plumb line to assess their validity. “Pastoral care and counseling must be able to show what is ‘Christian’ and ‘pastoral’ about what the minister—or the pastoral specialist—does when he/she offers services. And pastoral care must be able to show that what it has borrowed from other disciplines will not corrupt the essential thrust of its own unique perspective.” (Browning, p. 19)

The importance of this discernment was underscored a few years later when Bellah, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1981) observed that American religious life had over the past half-century become increasingly a culture of the therapeutic—reinterpreting the meaning and value of love, marriage,

family, personal growth, and commitment in highly individualistic ways that often departed significantly from traditional Judeo-Christian values.

The quasi-therapeutic blandness that has afflicted much of mainline Protestant religion at the parish level for over a century cannot effectively withstand the competition of the more vigorous forms of radical religious individualism, with their claims of dramatic self-realization, or the resurgent religious conservatism that spells out clear, if simple, answers in an increasingly bewildering world (Bellah et al., p.238)

In some ways, within mainline Protestant churches, psychology has been a kind of Trojan horse subtly changing Christianity from within,³ after having been embraced for its obvious ability to offer consolation and assistance to persons malnourished by an impoverished civil religion.

A decade later, an article appeared in *American Psychologist* suggesting that “psychology is, in American society, filling the void created by the waning influence of religion in answering questions of ultimacy and providing moral guidance” (Jones, 1994, p. 192). This was particularly interesting in that the author also noted that surveys consistently revealed mental health professionals as “an atypical subpopulation in America today, with lower levels of religious participation and higher levels of agnosticism, skepticism, and atheism than the general population” (p. 192). Only 24% of clinical and counseling psychologists in another survey reported belief in God, and only 26% stated they valued religion as “very important,” (Pargament, 2007). This is not an altogether surprising finding given the fact that mental health counselors in general have received little or no training in addressing the religious and spiritual dimensions of human concerns. Even though evidence suggests a significant relationship between the religious integration of the therapist and their capacity for clinical empathy (Muse, Estadt, Greer & Cheston, 1992), surveys of training directors of counseling psychology programs in the United States reveal that less than one out of five programs even offered a course on religion and spirituality. (Shulte, Skinner, & Claiborn, 2002)

So the question arises, “As an Orthodox Christian counselor, what moral universe do I serve and how does it influence my practice of counseling?” How important is it to make clear with those who seek our services as mental health practitioners, the moral and religious universe we ultimately serve in our life and work as a part of informed consent since it is likely to be influential in subtle ways?

Even with informed consent, there remains an on-going stance toward others and the world in Christ which has a reality far beyond the counselor’s personal belief system and which may or may not be explicitly part of the counseling relationship, but will nevertheless affect it. For the Christian: there is, in the ultimate reality of things, no non-spiritual life that is closed off to the Holy Spirit...The world that

is called *profane* is in reality a *profaned* world and man is responsible for that. We have expelled God from this world: we do it every day. We chase him from public life by a Machiavellian form of separation between our private lives – pious and good – and the domains of politics, commerce, science, technology, love, culture and work, where everything is allowed. All these domains of human work depend upon the creative work of man, seized, modeled, and inspired by the Spirit of God. (Bobrinskoy, 2006, p 192, emphasis added)

The person of Christ is central to both the counselor who functions pastorally in her/his role of psychotherapist, as well as in the way in which counseling and psychotherapy are conducted. Staniloae’s challenge that I quoted above (cited by Nesteruk, 2003), to unite the revealed patristic cosmic vision derived from the noetic encounter with divine grace, and the knowledge base of the human sciences obtained by empirical study, remains a vital one. Both Christian faith and the human sciences contribute to what it means for counseling to be pastoral. All would agree that counselors should be competent and skillfully trained in all scientific methods of healing. But Orthodoxy goes a step further, holding that there is in fact a “science” that pertains to and includes the noetically-perceived world of divine Grace, and this involves *ortho* (correct) praxis and *doxa* (glory/worship). Not any old form of either will do.⁴

Person of the therapist as the source of integration of spiritual and psychological

The unity between these two is clearly reflected in Orthodox tradition by a number of wonder-working, illumined, God-bearing *gerondas*⁵ or elders. Their encounters with those who seek their counsel and come to them for confession, are marked by clear evidence of possessing the charism of the Holy Spirit who works synergistically through them in ways that reveals the hidden inner thoughts of persons to them, heals diseases, and brings people to profound repentance on a frequent basis.⁶ While it is true that the “Spirit blows where it will” and remains ever out of control of human will, God is indeed responsive to the prayers of those who have reached *theosis*, and like Moses, St. Paul and the Apostles, speak with God and the Holy Spirit person to person.

This is not to say that God does not act in the lives and relationships of persons who have not yet reached *theosis*. But the fact that it happens more consistently and at far greater depth, through those whose hearts have been deeply illumined by grace, according to Orthodox understanding signifies a *qualitative* difference between those “God-bearing” dispassionate souls and those in whose lives unhealed passions continue to fragment the self’s motivations, causing blindness to the spiritual eye. This suggests at the very least, that the primary training ground of pastoral counselors and caregivers is the religious foundations of repentance, humility, obedience of ascetical struggle, worship, prayer, confession, and

love that form the person of the therapist in the image and likeness of Christ. This formation is the heart of an Orthodox approach to Christian life and also the lynchpin or central hub around which all other clinical theory and practice of science are integrated.

To borrow a modern analogy, we could say that Orthodox Christianity has measured effectiveness empirically, not so much through brief, time-limited, double-blind, randomized, controlled studies, but rather over millennia-long periods of history replete with replicability of numerous examples, throughout varying historical epochs, over huge cross-cultural catchment areas involving billions of subjects. In this way, a recognizable pattern of human development and Christian formation is detailed throughout Church history.⁷ In addition, the detailed patristic writings of illumined persons bearing the fruits of Orthodox spiritual life reveal quite accurate observations of the various states of the inner world of persons entering into life in Christ through struggle with the passions, watchfulness, repentance, and deep interior prayer of silence. Orthodox Christian history in this respect constitutes a virtual two-thousand year “therapy trial” far more rigorous and comprehensive than the research for current evidence-based approaches stemming from time-limited studies pharmaceutical companies used to get new medicines on the market that are barely better than placebos.⁸

Documents and writings of the Church, from the Gospels to the ancient desert abbas (fathers) and ammas (mothers) along with modern saints, acquire respect as faithful guides to life in Christ in so far as they embody the same life found in the Bible which the Holy Spirit has confirmed through the communal witness of the Church. These all become part of the on-going empirical validation or “canon” of the Church’s therapeutic process. Heresy can be viewed as a blueprint for a form of treatment which is incomplete and therefore likely to lead to harmful, different, or no results at all.

Elder Archimandrite Sophrony (1977) identifies the traditional Orthodox Christian spiritual disciplines that support the Holy Spirit’s work of purifying the heart, as being integral to the formation of persons capable of accurately diagnosing and offering care to suffering persons. After long struggle, it may become possible according to God’s grace, that in prayer: eventually the mind sees not the physical heart, but that which is happening within it—the feelings that creep in and the mental images that approach from without... When the attention of the mind is fixed in the heart it is possible to control what happens in the heart, and the battle against passions assumes a rational character. The enemy is recognized and can be driven off by the power of the Name of Christ. With this ascetic feat the heart becomes so highly sensitive, so discerning, that eventually when praying for anyone the heart can tell almost at once the state of the person prayed for. (pp 112-114)

One such illumined person of recent memory was Elder Porphyrios, who served for many years as

chaplain of the Polyclinic Hospital in Athens. Elder Porphyrios began his training in prayer, worship, obedience, and asceticism as a monk on Mount Athos. Like many wonder-working saints, he never received a formal academic education, yet he was consulted by physicians at the hospital and persons from all over the world for his clairvoyance, healing prayer, and spiritual guidance as a result of the Holy Spirit’s illumination. A priest (Yiannitsiotis, 2001) describes the reason for his “initial consultation” with the Elder in Athens.

I was going through a trial that I had never experienced before... of great length and great intensity, which threatened to tear me apart both physically and spiritually. I was vulnerable because the wound came from somewhere where I had innocently expected support or, at the very least, understanding. I was at a complete dead end, and I did not know what to do, because I saw a totally unacceptable solution in all the choices open to me. (p. 28)

Things grew worse for him, and he could not separate the psychological elements from the spiritual. He was prepared to suffer his situation, whatever the cost, if it was God’s will, but “if it came from the devil, I was determined to fight it to the end” (Yiannitsiotis, p. 28). His spiritual father, a humble man of discernment and love, suggested to him what must be done, but he had trouble accepting the solution. Given the difficulty of the dilemma, he suggested, “The person capable of answering your difficult question is Elder Porphyrios. I don’t know what you’ll have to do, ask, phone, search, until you find him. He will solve the puzzle for you. Afterwards, come back and we’ll talk about it again. Until then I can’t tell you anything on the matter” (p. 29).

The priest was skeptical. He didn’t want his own freedom tied down, but his spiritual father assured him that the elder never did this to anyone. He had some difficulty finding Elder Porphyrios who had no permanent address at the time. Weeks passed without any success in locating him, although he had sent word to him through several persons who knew the elder. Then one day he noticed an unusual inner state.

Late one afternoon, as I was walking home from work engulfed in the sorrow that had burdened my soul for months, I suddenly felt something unexpected within me. The clouds of sorrow dissolved, a bright warmth comforted me with calmness, and I felt like singing.

I secretly made the sign of the cross over myself, again and again and whispered full of disquiet: “Lord have mercy!” I knew myself well enough in such situations. These kinds of problems needed time for me to get over them; the sorrow always declined gradually. Since I was at the very center of my trial, what did this sudden and unexpected shift from sorrow to joy mean? However, a few minutes later, that joy vanished, and the sorrow returned.

This strange happening was to repeat itself in the days that followed. The mystery was solved when I was informed much later that my stranger, who was to become an exceptional friend, had contacted the Elder and had given him my name, and it had been placed on his prayer list (p. 30).

He finally was able to get an appointment with the elder at the hospital some time later and describes his initial apprehension and skepticism. "Various emotions inundated me on the way: Hopeful expectation, uneasiness, curiosity, reservation. What could an elderly poorly educated monk possibly say about my problem!" (p. 30). But this was quickly overcome by the grace that he experienced in the elder's presence.

I arrived at the chapel and waited. When my turn came, I went up to the confession room. A small-framed little old father was waiting for me. I was impressed as soon as he approached me. I kissed his hand and sat opposite him. He looked at me from behind his glasses with a couple of bright blue and lively eyes. Throughout that moment, I felt that his gaze was piercing my soul. I felt that this person knew me already. I noticed, at the same time, that his lips were whispering something, and I realized that he was praying continuously. He gave the impression that he both was and was not present, that he was both here and elsewhere at the same time.

He opened his mouth, and I heard his voice for the first time – refined, calm and charming. "Well then, what do you want to tell me?"

I remembered my spiritual father's advice and put my problem to him very briefly, no longer than five minutes and then I fell quiet. The Elder listened thoughtfully and sighed every now and then. I had the feeling that he was suffering my pain more than I was. Then I was bombarded by a host of novel surprises. The Elder analyzed my character with great care. He described and gave reasons for both my faults and my merits with such accuracy that even my own parents could not have come close to it. I saw my own self for the very first time, as I really am and not as I would like to be. This self-revelation was a moving experience for me. It gave me the impression that I was born, or rather re-born. Afterwards the Elder came to my problem. He shed light on it and explained it from all points of view. Both from my point of view and from that of the other people who were involved. With great sympathy, he pointed the correct and mistaken moves taken by myself and by the others, whose characters he also described. Then he assured me that the event that led to the dead-end dilemma was a temptation from the devil. He advised me about the way to face it. My spiritual father had suggested the same method.

Then he caught hold of my hand and took my pulse and pointed out my bodily sicknesses. This diagnosis was a summary of the sicknesses discovered by my doctor years before; it was also an explanation for them. Finally, he blessed me by making the sign of the cross over my head and said with much love,

"Well, get going now and we'll talk again the next time we meet."

I got up, kissed his hand. Overcome with emotions of wonder, peace and joy, I went towards the door. There, I turned right around and stood still, looking at him as though thunderstruck and trying to comprehend all the unbelievable things that had just happened to me – things that challenged my innate disbelief and rationalism. The Elder looked at me, smiled and said, "Why did you stop? Just do what I told you." I replied, "Elder, I didn't stop because I felt it was difficult to do what you told me, but rather to express my surprise. What you have told me to do is exactly what my spiritual father advised me to do. But, while I had some inner difficulty with him, with you, the way you explain the problems, I have no difficulty at all with continuing, not in thought, not in my heart, not in will. On the contrary, I feel that I would have rejected all other solutions other than the one you gave. It fits me perfectly, like a glove. I shall carry it out with pleasure." A broad grin lit up the Elder's face, which shined with joy, and added: "Go, go on now."

I bowed to him and left. As I went on my way, spiritually enchanted by the discovery of a real *staretz*,⁹ I realized the most wonderful thing of all the things that he had surprisingly revealed to me. With unrivalled pastoral skill, the Elder was able to calm my troubled soul, in a brief amount of time, and to make me joyfully desire what I had rejected just a short while before: God's will regarding my complicated problem. (p. 30)

A human heart not illumined by Grace cannot "see" or listen to the heart of a suffering person in the same way as one who having experienced *theosis*, is consistently humbled, contrite, and filled by the presence of Christ. Human science unaided by Grace, no matter how advanced it is, cannot come as exact to finding the precise *fit* that is needed for a person, as can the Holy Spirit. This is not a justification or excuse, as some use it, to refuse psychotherapy and human help unless it comes from a presumed clairvoyant elder. There are many pathologies inherent to such prideful seeking of perfection before being willing to risk vulnerability with another. By the same token, this does not excuse an Orthodox priest or lay counselor, who is not gifted with illumination, from getting appropriate training and supervision in human sciences, proper supervision and psychotherapeutic investigation of one's own issues, to be able to offer all that one can to suffering persons by way of up-to-date scientific understanding, as well as humble compassionate regard and trust in God as the healer. Good psychotherapy is helpful to repentance.

The "science" of spiritual formation

In light of repeated experiences of clairvoyance and miraculous interventions that occur throughout Orthodox history up to the present day as in this example, it is reasonable to ask if there is anything about how counseling and psychotherapy are conducted,

that lends itself to being corrected or improved by being informed by Orthodox Christian perspectives and being offered by Orthodox counselors formed in Christ through its ethos of worship, prayer, and ascetical self-restraint? Are outcomes better for persons who engage in Orthodox-informed therapeutic practices as compared with those who do not (Vujisic, 2011)? Can it be confirmed that there are significant differences in outcomes among those seeking healing from God through persons who are being themselves healed and illumined in Christ? If the answer to these questions is that it makes no difference whether one is Orthodox or not, illumined or not, whether one worships and prays or not, etc. then it becomes difficult to argue that Orthodoxy (or any other Christian theological perspective) has any relevant meaning.

The test of truth, as for medicine and all science, is ultimately a practical one. Does it work? This is the question that is vital to be asked in terms of Christianity itself, “for if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised and our faith is futile” (1 Cor 15:17). And if those who are in Christ are not illumined, then our worship and prayer are useless. If illumination and *theosis* are nothing more than mere assent to various historical facts and philosophical presuppositions, and do not arise from an encounter with the uncreated God, then they have no power to transform and could reasonably be viewed as artifacts of a pre-scientific era we would do well to be free of entirely.

Dogmatic considerations

The Eastern Orthodox Church views sin primarily as a combination of spiritual and mental illness along with what could be termed a spiritual developmental immaturity which needs life-long treatment. Christianity is above all a love relationship that becomes a path or “way” of healing and transformation through personal encounter which cannot be reduced to legalistic formulations and ‘justifications’ by logical propositions to which one intellectually or emotionally assents, as has become common in the West. Neither can it be reduced to psychological development alone, but requires an encounter with God that goes beyond psychology as in the example above.

God is not viewed as a righteous judge who must be appeased for human sin so much as a Lover who offers His own life as an invitation for humanity to do the same in return, thereby coming to be *person* as God is *Person*, and to love as God loves. This is the process of sanctification known in Orthodoxy as deification by grace or *theosis*.

Practically speaking, Romanides (2008), reflecting on the teaching of the Church Fathers, suggests that being mentally and spiritually ill “means your *nous*¹⁰ is full of thoughts....Anyone whose soul has not been purified from the passions¹¹ and who has not reached the state of illumination through the grace of the Holy Spirit is mentally ill” (pp. 23-

24), though not necessarily in a psychiatric sense according to the DSM-IV. St. Basil, in the fourth century, considered the church a hospital and the priests to be therapists of the soul. He created the first modern hospital complete with quality control, a geriatric wing, social services, and sanitation, uniting spiritual care and the best science of the day in the service and care of persons (Miller, 1985). From its beginnings, the church has cooperated with science in a harmonious way that was responsive to both the spiritual and psychological dimensions of human suffering (Larchet, 2002, 2012).

For this reason, in many ways, salvation (*theosis*) is best conveyed in the modern context as being both a medical treatment and a developmental process that unfolds through dialogue of personal encounter between other persons and God. However, this metaphor must not be understood reductionistically as conflating spiritual and psychological realities, which is an epistemological error, but rather as expanding the anthropological view of humankind beyond medicine and psychology, which deal solely with created realities, to include the developmental potentials of salvation that are available only through encounter with the *uncreated* energies of the divine *Persons* of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Trinity’s uncreated essence is beyond human psychology, beyond all created analogies, and cannot become the object of rational thought. We know the invisible God through faith and obedience to Christ by the witness of the Holy Spirit. These are personal noetic encounters with the uncreated divine energies who are one essence with God the Father,¹² which in turn are expressed existentially through our bodies and feelings in relationship with others and which constitutes our psychological selves. The disciples’ encounter with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, on the Mount of Transfiguration is an example of this (Lk 9:27-36), as is that between Motovilov, St. Seraphim of Sarov, and the Holy Spirit in the forest of Siberia (Zander, 1975, p. 89ff). Motovilov, who had wanted to be “certain that I am in the Spirit of God” suddenly found himself unable to look at Fr. Seraphim, “because your eyes are flashing like lightning. Your face has become brighter than the sun” (Zander, p. 90). Each of these examples is considered by Eastern Orthodoxy to be experiences of the uncreated light of the Divine presence which is not possible apart from the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

It is ultimately Christ’s own presence in our lives who “treats” and completes our human condition. Knowing about or “believing” things about Jesus’ historical life, while our actual existential engagements on earth remain unaltered, unexamined (lacking continuous on-going repentance) and with the same anthropocentric goals and objectives as before, does not move us beyond self-centered aims within the created world. Additionally, when we refuse to truly encounter any other person, we refuse Christ and our own healing, and full human development is diminished as well. Both are essential, “for the one

who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20).

The primary core dogmas which are foundational to an Orthodox approach to pastoral counseling are the Holy Trinity and the seamless unity of divine and human natures in Christ. Together, these provide a context and dogmatic plumb line for existential engagement that makes possible the struggle to live the truth of the faith in and through relationship with both the created and uncreated worlds. Intellectual apprehension and consent to verbal formulations of doctrines does not constitute faith. It has been said that the Nicene Creed does not belong to you until you live it. Faith is expressed existentially in love through the call and response of relationship. Truth is a relationship with Christ that must be lived in order to be understood, something that emerges from personal encounter from a depth of heart that is evidenced by “sighs too deep for words” before it ever becomes formulated into concepts. Experience is always I-It; a subject-object representation of what is already past. Or as Soren Kirkegaard observed somewhere, “We live forward but we understand backwards.”

Epistemological considerations

The divine and human natures of Christ seamlessly united in his Person “without division or separation, without confusion or admixture”¹³ provide the bridge for two distinct realms of knowing that are part of pastoral care and counseling. One dimension involves direct noetic perception by means of encounter with the uncreated energies of God. This is the result of the action of the Holy Spirit working in the heart through faith, which is outside of human control, but, as in any love relationship, responsive to human intention and assent.¹⁴ The other has to do with integrating the psychological processes of the created world, such as intuitional, sensual, and irrational ways of knowing, along with the scientist-practitioner’s rational empiricism and clinical theory in the service of attending to the other with vulnerability, humility, and dispassionate love. One is aware of being in the presence of God and guided by Holy Scripture and Patristic witness as one seeks to listen, discern, and respond in love.

The foundation for offering pastoral care and counseling rests with the counselor’s continuous repentance,¹⁵ the necessity for on-going examination of the proverbial “log in one’s eye” from the standpoint not merely of the counselor’s counter-transference, but one’s entire psycho-somatic functioning in relation to God. Ideally speaking, the pastoral counselor seeks to approach each person as it were, “through Christ” with recognition that every personal experience and every theoretical model including the entire experience of the counselor, inevitably distorts and objectifies the other, totalizing and/or deconstructing the other from the uniquely real and particular being he or she is in specific concrete situations, into a kind of abstraction. This is what philosopher Martin Buber calls the relationship of *I-It* (Buber, 1970), which is inevitably

monological. This recognition of the impossibility of fully knowing or encountering the “other” apart from Christ through subjective experience alone, which is inevitably I-It, is consonant with the Orthodox perspective which regards each person as an icon of the Lord so that “as you have done unto the least of these you have done unto me” (Mt 25:40). Just as is the case with God, there is an apophatic dimension to each person whose essential life remains “hid with Christ in God” (Co. 3:3) and ultimately beyond the experience of the counselor. This is a humbling reminder for the necessity of approaching the client prayerfully, with on-going examination of the “log in the therapist’s own eye” as well as an important reminder not to lose people behind diagnostic labels and psychological theories, however useful they may be for organizing data and securing payments from third party insurers.

The plumb line for the pastoral counseling relationship, as interpreted by Holy Scripture, the witness of the Church and Tradition, is Jesus Christ who promises to be present “wherever two or more are gathered in my name.” (Mt. 18:20) in “between” counselor and client.¹⁶ This is the dimension of Buber’s (1970) *I-Thou* relationship which is the larger relational context in which intersubjective dialogue becomes the triad of *δια-Λογος* (Muse, 2011, 2013)—an encounter of created persons with each other through Christ. In encountering one another, both client and counselor stand before Christ, whose image each one invisibly bears. It is a reminder that ontologically, the counselor is never “above” the other as “judge” but always co-pilgrim in a reciprocal relationship with him or her. As a servant of Christ, the counselor imitates John the Baptist who must “decrease” in order that the recognition of the client being in Christ may “increase.” This is a Copernican revolution in terms of challenging the usual power differential of the “doctor-patient” relationship, just as it is for God in Christ to become human and a servant of all. It is the *kenosis*, or self-emptying of Christ, that makes room for the other to appear. The humility, stillness, and inner silence of the therapist are what make room for the client. Compassion, born of the presence of Christ, is what comprehends a person’s uniqueness. If the client is not for me one to whom I say *Thou*, as through Christ in between us, then I am not yet in right relationship with myself, with the client or with God.

Sola Scriptura and the Person of Christ

While for the Orthodox Church, Holy Scripture is the inspired canonical standard from which Tradition does not depart¹⁷ and provides the basis for most of its worship life, the Church’s understanding of Scripture is situated within a robust epistemological and existential context. The text of the Scripture does not stand alone apart from the experience of personal encounter with Christ and the Church. Scripture does not interpret itself apart from the confirmation of the Holy Spirit alive in the Church through its worship,

mysteries (sacraments), and the witness of those God-illuminated persons throughout the centuries that comprise the “theologians”¹⁸ of Orthodox tradition who have experienced glorification (purification, illumination, and *theosis*).

Romanides (2008) emphasizes the Orthodox approach to Holy Scripture which is careful not to confuse intellectual apprehension of the words of Scripture with the reality of the infusion of divine life to which the words point:

Is there a single Church Father who identified the Holy Scripture with the experience of *Theosis* itself? No, there is not one, because God’s revelation to mankind is the experience of *Theosis*. In fact, since revelation is the experience of *Theosis*, an experience that transcends all expressions and concepts, the identification of Holy Scripture with revelation is, in terms of dogmatic theology, pure heresy (p.109).

Scripture was written by persons who had experienced *theosis*; those who by the power of the Holy Spirit had witnessed the glorified Christ. In the same way, its interpretation must be from those who have encountered Christ. In this sense, the authority of Scripture is charismatically rooted (understood as illumination by Grace within the Body of the Church) rather than based solely and primarily on the text of Scripture. The illumined community of the Church exists *prior to* Scripture whose authority and canonicity is confirmed by the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to guide the Church from generation to generation until the end of time (Jn 14:16). Apart from this on-going charismatic life of the Church, Florovsky (1987) points out how:

if we declare Scripture to be self-sufficient, we only expose it to subjective, arbitrary interpretation, thus cutting it away from its sacred source. Scripture is given to us in tradition. It is the vital, crystallizing centre. The Church, as the Body of Christ, stands mystically first and is fuller than Scripture (p. 48).

At the same time, the Church itself, if it were to rely on using human reason alone, apart from the noetically illumined theologians within it, can also fail to interpret Scripture correctly as the historical divisions and excommunication of persons later recognized to be correct attest. Therefore, it is important to apply the same understanding to the theologians of the Church as Romanides (2008) does to Scripture when he writes:

You cannot hope to theologize correctly simply because you have read the Bible and base your theology on the Bible....Holy Scripture can be correctly interpreted only when the experience of illumination of *theosis* accompanies the study or reading of the Bible. Without illumination or *theosis*, Holy Scripture cannot be interpreted correctly (p. 129).

Why is this distinction important for pastoral counseling? Because the same is true for the hermeneutical relationship between the pastoral counselor and the client, who as a “living human document” (Gherkin, 1984), and ultimately

requires the same kind of illumined “interpretation.” Otherwise, we constantly risk normalizing persons and reforming theology according to implicit cultural and psychological norms rather than those of the Christian faith for whom Jesus Christ is the developmental azimuth and “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

Only a relationship of love in Christ preserves both the freedom of the individual person as well as the freedom of the Church as *personal*, rather than being crushed and constrained under the weight of human centered, ideological appropriations of Christ. Where humble personal encounter and repentance leading to illumination are set aside in favor of self-centered human reason, Scripture, Church, doctrine, and ascetical life are all in danger of being ideologically appropriated and absolutized, effectively holding the person of Christ captive to an idolatry that serves untransformed human purposes. This inevitably results in a parallel process of diminishment of personhood for both counselor and client. The Russian theologian Nicholas Berdyaev elaborates on the necessary order:

Everything is decided in the life of the spirit, in the spiritual experience. The Holy Spirit does not act like the forces of nature or the social forces. The hierarchical organization of the Church, which is historically unavoidable, the constitution of the canons, are secondary phenomena, and not paramount. The only paramount phenomenon is the spiritual life and what is discovered in it. It is the spiritual life that keeps the Church sanctified (cited by Struve, 2007).

The importance of this distinction can be seen for example, in the Gospel account where a conflict arose between Jewish scholars who objected to Jesus healing a paralytic on the Sabbath and for calling God his Father, “making himself equal with God” (Jn 5:18). Jesus’ response is quite clear regarding the error of placing Scripture and ideology over persons and failing the test of love lived out in relationship in response:

The testimony which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen; and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him who he has sent. *You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; and yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life* (Jn 5:36-39).

Where freedom is constrained by ideology or by failure to existentially encounter the other, love is not possible. Where love is not lived, truth is absent. If God is not *Person*, belonging to what Zizioulas (2007) calls a “communion of otherness” that exists between the members of the Holy Trinity, showing forth the distinctive uniqueness and unity of each person in

love, then neither can we be. An Orthodox approach to pastoral counseling is possible only by protecting both love and freedom, looking to Christ as the author and finisher of our faith in the context of existential engagement, the personal character of which alone confirms the living presence of the Trinitarian God.

God is a community of Persons who know and are known through love

The ontological heart of the Eastern Church is the *personhood* of the Triune God and a distinction between the energies and personal essence of God in contrast to the Western Church's increasing reliance, after the Enlightenment, on a scholastic approach following Thomas Aquinas, which conflates¹⁹ these, beginning with *substance* and then reasoning by analogy about the nature and existence of God as an object or force through logical categories.

Eastern Orthodoxy's noetic epistemology of personal encounter with God leading to *theosis* resists change based on psychological and social forces, while the West's increasing reliance on a scientific approach delimited by reason, utilizing discursive thought and logical categories to know about God as revealed in Scripture, has led to a variety of theological changes. These differences have resulted in distinctly different approaches to pastoral care and counseling which are evident among the different emphases of various professional organizations for pastoral counselors.

For example, in the American context, the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), which had its beginnings in the early 1960's, began with ordained clergy getting clinical training drawing from humanistic, psychoanalytic, and later transpersonal psychological theories to enhance pastoral care and counseling. Beginning as a professional group for specialized ministry within the church, AAPC has since moved to embrace a variety of religious faiths, gradually redefining "pastoral" care and counseling within a pluralistic and inter-religious context, which at times is arguably far removed from its Christian origins, as for example in the case of a Protestant clergyman who presented for therapy with depression and loss of vocational satisfaction.

In listening to his story, it became clear to me that he had been teaching and preaching Jungian psychology in his parish for some time in the guise of Christian faith. Individuation had taken precedence over formation within the communion of Christ. Like Rudolf Bultmann (e.g., 1984), he rejected the literal resurrection of Christ because it was not scientifically tenable. Gradually the people had begun to reject him, and he was depressed. I suggested to him that he had departed from traditional Christian faith and was in effect teaching a different "gospel" without being upfront about it. Like Jung himself, he had lost confidence in the Christianity of history and was seeking to refashion it along psychological lines delimited by logic, as other modern theologians and denominations are doing in a variety of ways. Borg (2003), for example, argues for a non-traditional

Christian theology because the traditional orthodox understanding is no longer acceptable to modern consciousness:

The image of the Christian life that goes with this image of Jesus emphasizes believing all of this to be true: that Jesus is the only Son of God, born of a virgin; that he died for our sins; that he rose physically from the dead; that he will come again; and so forth. This image of Jesus no longer works for millions of people, both within and outside the church. For these millions, it's literalism and exclusivity are not only unpersuasive, but a barrier to finding Christ (p 82).

I submit that because of a failure to be clear regarding the distinction between the created energies of psychology and the uncreated spiritual energies of God that are seamlessly united in the person of Christ, while remaining distinct, the field of pastoral counseling has been unable to avoid gradual trending in this same anthropocentric direction. Thus, there have arisen all manner of psycho-spiritual amalgams of Christianity, syncretistic "Esperanto" faiths representing psychological manifestations, rather than directives of the Holy Spirit. In this sense they are modern forms of ancient heresies for whom Timothy's warning seems justified, that these have "the form of religion but are lacking its power" (II Tim 3:5) to transform.

Repentance, humility and love are the crux of integration between theology and science

Fr. Georges Florovsky (1987) observes, "No one profits by the Gospels unless he be first in love with Christ. For Christ is not a text but a living Person, and he abides in his Body, the Church" (p.14) and "an unbeliever has no access to the message, simply because he does not 'receive' it (p. 14). For him, there is no "message" in the Bible (p.19) in the same way that there is no "message" in everyday life apart from faith.

From the perspective of an Orthodox priest or counselor working with an Orthodox Christian, counseling (and confession) are pastoral to the extent that they further the ends of the Church in forming persons in Christian life and helping nurture the love for Christ that has been awakened in them by the Holy Spirit. Often times, pastoral care is about deepening a person's capacity to bear suffering in faith more so than stimulating freedom of feeling and self-expression as understood in the American context that prizes individualism and self-love over obedience to Christ and loving service to the community. At other times, pastoral counseling involves addressing forms of characterological disorder and the sequelae of metabolic disturbances, and trauma which can become a means through which spiritual deception occurs, impeding formation in Christ. Both spiritual discernment and psychological science have their proper places according to the need of the client and the gifts of the therapist.

Nevertheless, just as God "causes his sun to

rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Mt 5:45), Christ came for all people, and an Orthodox approach to pastoral counseling serves those who confess Christ as well as those who do not,²⁰ albeit in different ways. This occurs in secular, interdenominational, and interfaith contexts in which counselors who are Orthodox work with clients who are not. Excluding ideological appropriations of Orthodoxy which are a betrayal of Christ, we can ask the question, “What makes counseling *pastoral* in such settings, when it occurs with persons who do not confess love for Christ and who are not within the Church sacramentally, or with those who proclaim atheism or confess other faiths?” Likewise, what about those who profess to be Christian, but who existentially appear to be closed off from Christ in their hearts; their religion serving only their egos? An elder²¹ from Mt Athos observes how it is the illumination and transformation of the heart that is the true sign of Christ’s presence, not the outer form. From this vantage point, he defines the true atheist as “a person who has no real relationships with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is not active in his or her heart. Such a person may appear externally as deeply pious, going to church every Sunday, doing all the things that one is expected to do as a Christian, but his or her heart is completely shut off from the energies of the Holy Spirit” (Markides, 2012, p. 95).

Many of the more obvious contextual variables of empathy and use of appropriate evidence-based theories and methods will be quite similar among practitioners. Where the difference might be seen has to do with the formation of the therapist. Ideally, pastoral counseling becomes an offering of the prayerful presence of one’s own collected three-dimensional being to dialogue with the other in the presence of God, whether acknowledged overtly or not. This requires the counselor’s ongoing ascetical struggle for humility, repentance, obedience, and love through continuous prayer, regular confession, spiritual direction, and worship. Whatever else she or he does, the Orthodox Christian pastoral counselor, the same as the priest at the Divine Altar, enters into call and response relationship invoking God’s presence and seeking to be receptive to God’s activity unfolding in the here and now with the intention of recognizing Christ in the other, and offering Christ to the other while serving at the altar of the human heart.

Whether or not the client is Christian, the pastoral counselor who is, will operate within a Christian worldview, formed and informed by Christian faith and life, though not in an ideological sense. In a now famous debate with Werner Heisenberg, who was insisting that only empirical data should be included in a theory, Einstein responded, “It is quite wrong to try founding a theory on observable magnitudes alone. In reality the very opposite happens. It is theory which decides what we can observe” (quoted in Watzlawick, 1977 p. 58.). In this case, the “deep

things of the Spirit” are the basis of Orthodox faith and life and are what gradually transforms a person. These affect what we can “see” even more so than do the gender, family of origin, culture, and worldviews of the times we live in. Illumination by the Holy Spirit is more cross-culturally relevant than the various clinical theories and the normative presumptions inherent to the diagnostic criteria of the DSM-IV. There is a shared life and human essence, made in the Image of God, with the potential for being in God’s likeness. This is common to all on the earth, regardless of all these variables, just as each of these dimensions contribute to rendering each one utterly unique in Christ Who fulfills and safeguards this uniqueness, as Zizioulas (2007) has pointed out, while being in communion among all just as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one and yet each unique persons. Like sunlight which shines on all, Orthodoxy is a science of spiritual reality available to all, not an ideology emotionally grasped from an anthropocentric foundation that renders it simply one form of religion among many.

All data-gathering and diagnosis involve subtle distortions and an objectification of persons. Only the relationship of love, which involves communion beyond time and space and beyond the will and desire and the possibility of an individual person to create, stands in relation to the other in such a way that Christ is sacramentally present between the two in the mystery of *meeting*. This means that healing in its fullest dimension is not and can never be *merely technical*. Nor can Christian-based pastoral counseling, while indeed evidence-based, be correctly viewed as an ideology, a methodology, or reduced to a worldly “psychotherapy” that can be delivered from a workbook as a standardized method.

This means that the counselor, as far as possible, approaches each person as British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion has suggested, with “a state of mind so that at every session he feels he has not seen the patient before. If he feels he has, he is treating the wrong patient” (as cited by Wallin, 2007, p. 329) This *unknowing*, when rooted in love and dispassion with faith in Christ as the primary therapist, has the utmost implications for the practice, calling, and training of pastoral counselors, as well as for those in ordained pastoral ministry. This unknowing is founded upon the deeper unknowing that is inherent to the noetic meeting of the created person with the uncreated God.

Love is authentic only where Christ is present

Without a humble attitude and presence that includes loving sensitivity and respect for the other’s uniqueness, along with vulnerability and ascetical fidelity to the Holy Spirit, any one of us, whether armed with the latest science or even genuine spiritual experience, is capable of missing the mark and so failing to respond to the hidden depth and uniqueness of a person. This can be the result either by lack of real meeting with them, losing major aspects of the person by fitting them into the Procrustean bed of our theories and unexamined privilege,²² egocentricity

and ethnocentricity,²³ or by settling for too imprecise a fit resulting from the counselor's own untransformed passions and unconscious countertransference impeding understanding. Sincerity of intention and scientific precision, in and of themselves, do not guarantee discerning the exact "fit" for a person and a given situation. This is the work of the Holy Spirit working in conjunction with the person's freedom.

There is a reciprocity to a clinical encounter in which the counselor is also affected. Aboriginal elder Lila Watson captures this with the caveat, "If you have come to help us, don't bother, but if you have come recognizing that your liberation is bound up with ours, then let us work together."²⁴

I believe this expresses also the relationship within the Christian community and the world—one not of any sort of triumphalism, whether overt or more subtle, but rather a clear recognition of the oneness and diversity of humanity who share a common Creator and a common mutually responsible life, yet approached in as many unique ways as there are people. I tell my students, "If you haven't been changed by your relationship with your clients, then you haven't met them yet."

This is because real "meeting" is never imperialistic in which I who *am* or *have* or *know* do unto you who *are not* or *have not* or *know not*. Rather, it is always co-pilgrimage in which both are changed by the encounter with the Lord who appears in our midst, whether recognized or not. We enter into love for one another that is authentic only where Christ is present. As an Orthodox Christian, I believe that it is Christ alone who makes such meeting possible, whether recognized or not – a reality rendered dogmatically by the doctrine of the *perichoresis*²⁵ of the Holy Trinity, which may be considered prototypical for marriage, friendship in community, as well as the healing relationship.

Summary: So what makes counseling pastoral?

In practice, pastoral counseling as an Orthodox Christian involves the difficulty of balancing rational science with receptivity to Holy Spirit-illuminated noetic perception as a kind of mid-wife who seeks to discover the exact "fit" for a particular person in a given situation, which the Holy Spirit is bringing to birth. This entails the difficulty of meeting a person dialogically along what Martin Buber (1970) referred to as the "narrow ridge" between the *a priori* surety of mathematical models and the inviolable freedom and uniqueness of persons in the created world. In the final analysis, counseling is pastoral to the degree that it serves the truth of Christ, which respects the complexity and uniqueness of each person in the sight of God, for whom every hair is numbered and every sparrow that falls from the tree is noticed. The I-Thou relationship is what reinvigorates and changes us through the miracle of "meeting." Because Christ is in the midst of this *δια-Λογος* (dia-Logos), as in Emmaus, it is always potentially salvific in contrast with merely 'improving' or relieving psychological or

physical symptoms.

Without such dialogue in which I and You are linked *between* by uncreated love – the Eternal Thou of Christ who is forever in our midst wherever such dialogue occurs whatever our theoretical orientation and motivation – we can be sure we are approaching the counseling relationship merely technically, without an authentic reaching out to the other in love which is the essence of dialogue. The encounter remains monological, I-It, which Buber (1993, p. 24) warns "is Lucifer." It is only through *δια-Λογος* that love is truly present, and we become human beings. For as Jesus pointed out to his disciples, "Wherever two or more are gathered in my name, there *I AM*."

By reducing persons to fit a model, however scientifically accurate or dogmatically correct, the value of the human person is sacrificed on the operating table of theory and ideology, rather than the counselor standing before the altar of the heart and opening in mercy to a reciprocal personal encounter which invites growth and transformation because Christ is present in the midst. It is precisely the self-sacrifice and loving service of the counselor in dialogue with the other which are necessary until that "fit" is discovered, which is "Truth and Life" for the person with his or her particular nature and circumstances. Using power and control over the other that is not necessary or appropriate to protect the freedom of the person and the boundaries of counseling, is abuse, whether in religious or scientific form. However dogmatically correct or scripturally consistent one seeks to be privately, the necessity for "not knowing" – the sacrifice of certainty – remains on the part of the caregiver, so that the greater life of soul in the other is preserved against the unconscious aggressions of the smaller life of the ego seeking its own self-preservation.

Eric Fromm (1989), in his lovely book *The Art of Loving*, captures the paradox of this tension with his arresting image of the scientist (or book-learned theologian) who can name and categorize every aspect of the butterfly pinned to the page, except for its life, which can only be known through love while it is alive, flitting from one flower to the next. For me, the answer to the question of "What makes counseling pastoral?" is simply the "fit" that connects one with Christ and all others without betraying anyone's freedom. This is because the sheep will only obey the shepherd's voice. The right approach is the only one that actually works. The yoke that is "easy" and the "burden that is light" is the one that fits EXACTLY – the one made ONLY for you or for me; the one that allows us to "hit the mark" for which God intends us in a given situation and over a lifetime.

If not for the imagery of sheep and shepherd that permeate Christian history, the English word "pastor" would not be so rich with evocations of spiritual care and comfort. The heart of what I am saying is rooted in what this imagery is meant to convey about our relationship to the Good Physician of our souls and bodies and about the process of salvation that results from it. What makes counseling *pastoral* is

that it is ultimately focused on what is redemptive. By addressing a disorder specified in the DSM-IV within the larger developmental context of potential life in Christ, a way is opened to *theosis*. Apart from this there can be no truly pastoral counseling, except to the extent of course, that all healing and relief of unnecessary suffering is in and of itself, *good*.

The effectiveness of counseling from an Orthodox Christian perspective is the degree to which it contributes to and facilitates the formation of a *person* in Christ by clearing away obstacles to the fullness of life in the Church and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the Orthodox Christian psychotherapist is midwife to the greater healing and developmental processes of God at work in the Church and in the world to bring redemptive life to those whom God has created and loved at great price to Himself, as we see in the cross and passion of Christ depicted in the Gospels. When this occurs with non-Christians and the name of Christ is not even mentioned, it will still be informed by the loving presence of the pastoral counselor and to this extent will be an aspect of pastoral counseling.

So there remains a paradox here. When we Orthodox Christians sing in the Liturgy, "We have found the true faith," it is not a license to confuse the Living Christ with a static institutional form or ideological model that obviates the uniqueness or freedom of other persons to find Christ in their situations, knowingly or unknowingly, for we acknowledge that through the Holy Spirit Christ is "in all places and fills all things." He is larger than the institutional structure of the Church, as he is larger than the Temple and the orthodoxy of the Law "made by human hands" in the Israel of his day. Thus Metropolitan Kallistos Ware's (1997) perspicacious remark, "We know where the Church is, but we do not know where it isn't" (p.308), remains a corrective to pride and authoritarian fundamentalism masquerading as faith. The difference between co-opting faith and the Church to serve the ego and sacrificing the ego in faith to serve the Church is as night and day. We are ever pilgrims and sinners who can be confident and hopeful in the love of God while at the same time mindful that it is "not I but Christ who lives in me" who acts "between" us to heal and redeem us. We are never in control of the process. It is ever a gift.

A working definition of pastoral counseling

Counseling is pastoral to the degree that it emerges out of an existential stance that accords inviolable freedom to the person to choose her/his own way while

bringing to bear science, humble faith in God as healer and respect for the mystery of the person whose self (life) is forever beyond any diagnosis "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3) and which

evidences a love that endures all that is part of an eternally open-ended dialogical relationship with the other rooted not primarily in what I the counselor

do, but in God who loves each of us as set forth in the Holy Scriptures and revealed through the Holy Spirit at work among the cloud of witnesses who make up the Church universal.

To the extent that the counselor is on the path of purification, illumination, and *theosis* as understood by the Orthodox Church, he or she is more likely to fulfill these conditions. This is not in any way to be understood as placing limits on the Holy Spirit's activity among persons beyond our understanding and regardless of the theoretical model we are working within. Rather, it locates the essence of pastoral care and counseling in the *person*—of God and of the therapist and of the client— instead of in any methodology, ideology, worldview, or technical precision of science. While all these have their place and value, the words of the Apostle Paul from I Corinthians 13 remain most relevant. It is love that "believes all, hopes all and endures all" (I Cor 13), and love is not a human virtue or power, but a function of the abiding *presence* of Christ drawing life into the dust of us and uniting us in meeting with the living God through Himself. "Cut off from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). From an Orthodox understanding, Jesus Christ is and shall remain the source of all spiritual growth and psychological healing.

Notes

¹ In Greek the word λειτουργία, (*leiturgia*), from which the Divine Liturgy takes its name, means "work of the people." This "work" refers to the call and response intended between priest, the people, and God. The entire worship is chanted. Sadly, in many churches, this has fallen to priest and Psalti (cantor). Ideally, each person should be responding with full prayerful collected attention of body, mind, and heart, throughout the service, as an invocation to God and the Holy Spirit through Christ "who is ever in our midst" or "between us."

² *Theosis* (not to be confused with the LDS teaching regarding deification or what they call "exaltation") is the salvation that is the end result of sanctification resulting from the encounter with the uncreated divine energies of God that purify and illumine the heart, bringing a person into union with the Holy Trinity through indwelling in Christ. As St. Athanasius pointed out, humanity remains by essence human, but by grace, God, just as iron remains metal by essence, but becomes fire by the indwelling of heat.

³ This is not the fault of psychology per se, but the result of a confused epistemology and ecclesiology that does not distinguish the created and uncreated worlds. When psychic and spiritual realities are conflated, there is theological perspective from which to critique psychology other than reason, which in our fallen state, is corrupted.

⁴ This is not to say that God does not work in and

through incorrect doctrinal understanding, but rather that this fact does not thereby legitimate such misunderstandings as being equally “correct.” For a summary of the dogmatic foundations of an Orthodox ascetical approach to spiritual illness, see Larchet, J. (2012). *Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*. Vols. I-III Montreal: Alexander Press, and Chrysostomos, A. (2006). *A Guide to Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science, Theology, and Spiritual Practice Behind It and Its Clinical Application*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

⁵ Greek, literally meaning “old man” (the Russian word is *staretz*) is both an affectionate and honorific title given to those persons who are regarded as god-bearing, illumined persons gifted with clairvoyance and other gifts of the Spirit evidenced in people’s lives.

⁶ For a fuller account of some 20th century miracle-working, illumined elders see Joseph of Vatopaidi, (1999). *Elder Joseph the Hesychast: Struggles, experiences, teachings (1898-1959)*. Vatopaidi Monastery: Greece: Vatopaidi Monastery; Yiannitsiotis, C. (2001). *With Elder Porphyrios: A spiritual child remembers*. (Marina Robb, Trans.). Athens: Holy Convent of the Transfiguration of the Savior; Sophrony, A. (1991). *St. Silouan the Athonite*. Essex, England: Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist; Markides, K. (2001). *The Mountain of silence: A Search for Orthodox spirituality*. New York: Doubleday.

⁷ Cf C. Cook. *The Philokalia and the Inner Life* (Cambridge, UK: Clarke & Co., 2011). A physician examines the writings of the fathers of the *Philokalia* from the perspective of modern psychotherapy.

⁸ Cf. Begley, S. “Studies suggest that the popular drugs are no more effective than a placebo. In fact, they may be worse.” *Newsweek.com*. Feb.8, 2010, pp. 35-41.

⁹ Russian name for a Holy Spirit-illumined elder.

¹⁰ *Nous* (nous) refers to the noetic faculty of intelligence or “eye of the heart” as distinct from the *διανοια* (*dianoia*) or the logical, discursive reasoning faculty. Orthodox anthropology holds that in the fall, instead of dwelling in the stillness of the heart attentive to God where it belongs, the *nous* left the heart and became identified with the content of thoughts and with reason, leaving humankind subject to all manner of spiritual delusions, anxieties, and passions associated with the suffering of self-centeredness and death. An Orthodox approach involves restoring the *nous* to its proper place. Cf Bradshaw, D. “On drawing the mind into the heart: Psychic wholeness in the Greek Patristic Tradition,” accessed July 2012, <http://www.cas.sc.edu/socna/research/papers/bradshaw-mindheart.pdf>

¹¹ In Orthodox usage, *passions* are afflictive, unredeemed psychological states and emotions

that effectively darken the heart, creating strongholds of sinful proclivities. When purified and illumined of these, the heart sees and reflects God as in “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

¹² The essence-energies distinction is clarified by St. Gregory Palamas in the 14th century, in a famous debate with Barlaam, the Calabriate, who put forth the Western church’s viewpoint that God could not be experienced, as the Eastern Christians claimed, but only known about discursively. This subsequently led to a significant spiritual divide in Western and Eastern Christian approaches to prayer, worship, and formation.

¹³ From the Chalcedonian formula clarifying the single person and two natures of Christ seamlessly and unconfusedly united.

¹⁴ In Orthodoxy, experience has confirmed for two-thousand years that the activity of the Holy Spirit works to make our hearts humble and to cleanse us of passions, gradually illumining us over time by the divine uncreated energies of God received through the *nous*, so that it becomes true as St. Paul observes, “it is no longer I but Christ who lives in me.”

¹⁵ The Greek word translated as repentance, *μετανοια* (*metanoia*), refers to the process that reverses the fall, in which the *nous* re-enters the heart and remains there still, free of passions and identification with thoughts, and so able to receive and metabolize the energies of grace.

¹⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1954) captures the existential implications of this well. “Because Christ stands between me and others... I must release the other person from every attempt of mine to regulate, coerce and dominate him with my love. The other person needs to retain (her) independence of me; to be loved from what (s)he is, as one for whom Christ became man, died, and rose again, for whom Christ brought forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Because Christ has long since acted decisively for my (neighbor), before I could begin to act, I must leave him freedom to be Christ’s; I must meet her only as the person that she already is in Christ’s eyes. This is the meaning of the proposition that we can meet others only through the mediation of Christ. Human love constructs its own image of the other person, of what (s)he is and what (s)he should become. It takes the life of the other person into its own hands. Spiritual love recognizes the true image of the other person which he has received from Jesus Christ; the image that Jesus Christ himself embodied and would stamp upon all (persons).” (pp. 22-23)

¹⁷ St Gregory the Theologian’s 4th century AD view of Scripture is characteristic of the Orthodox approach to Holy Scripture to the point of “the accuracy of the Spirit to every letter and serif (of the Scripture),” C. Browne & J. Swallow (Trans.).

Orations of Gregory Nazianzus: In Defense of his Flight to Pontus. From the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers Series, section. 105. Posted at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Orations_of_Gregory_of_Nazianzus/In_Defence_of_His_Flight_to_Pontus/Part_III#Section_105

¹⁸ A *theologian* in the Orthodox sense is not one who studies with the mind, but one whose heart has been purified and enlightened by the divine energies of grace through prayer and obedience so that what the Scriptures testify to in words is understood through experience.

¹⁹ Aquinas argues in *Summa Theologica*, (1.11.4), “God is considered to be pure energy or ‘pure act’ in that His divine energies are the same as His essence” (Dounetas, 2009, p. 31). If this were true, humanity would not be able to encounter God personally, but only contemplate Him rationally as object. *Theosis* would be impossible, because no creature can commune with “pure act” who is not “person.” For implications of how a Scholastic understanding of the Holy Trinity is associated with cultural trends which give rise to human being as defined by needs of nature (*ousia*) ousia and possessions (*perousia*) perousia or “what one accumulates” instead of “who one *is*,” cf. Dounetas (2009).

²⁰ It is necessary to distinguish between those who confess Christ with the lips, but may not with their lives, while others may refuse assent to certain intellectual propositions regarding Christ, but may actually be confessing Christ as evidenced by the Spirit at work in their hearts and lives without their understanding it. So the Orthodox pastoral counselor is de facto an evangelist by virtue of being a psychotherapist in the sense of the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner (as cited by Kaiser, 1981), who suggests the problem of theology is not how to get religion into people, but how to draw it out. The loving act of listening and confirming another human being’s reality is deeply evangelical at the process level, even if at the content level, Christ is never mentioned. Why is this? Because “God is love” and love is not possible unless Christ is present.

²¹ An ‘elder’ or *staretz* (Russian), signifies one who, usually after long struggle and obedience, has gained maturity and some degree of illumination in the faith, giving rise to the ability to discern spirits and guide others in their prayer life and journey in Christ.

²² Cf. Lewis Z. Schlosser. (2003). “Christian privilege: Breaking a sacred taboo,” *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 31, 48-49; Peggy McIntosh. (1988). “White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in Women’s Studies,” 70-81, In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, Class, and Gender:*

An Anthology (pp. 70-81). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

²³ Hinkle, J. & Hinkle, G. (1992). Surrendering the self: Pastoral counseling at the limits of culture and psychotherapy. *Journal of Pastoral Care*, 64, 103-116.

²⁴ This quote is often attributed to Lila Watson, an aboriginal elder and activist. Watson has suggested that she is not comfortable being credited with something that belongs from to the collective process of the Aboriginal elders than to herself. Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilla_Watson (retrieved December 31, 2012).

²⁵ *Perichoresis* is constructed from the Greek words *περί* ,(peri) for “around” and *χωρεα* (chorea) for “space” used by St. Gregory of Nazianzus and others, to signify the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As this is explained by Jesus to the disciples in John 14-17, once the Holy Spirit is given to them, they will dwell in Him as He dwells in the Father and all will be perfectly one. *Perichoresis* refers to the mystery of the unity of the three distinct persons of the Trinity who reciprocally contain one another through the co-inherence of their self-emptying love. “One permanently envelopes and is permanently enveloped by, the other whom he yet envelopes” (Hilary of Poitiers as cited in Elowsky, 2007, p. 131).

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Interview with Father Gregory Jensen: An Eastern Orthodox Priest Shares Some Light from the East for the Healing of the Soul

Father Gregory Jensen

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The Next Step Counseling Services

There has been a recent Eastern Orthodox renaissance in the West regarding the curiosity of the Eastern-Christian perspective on the healing of the soul. Father Gregory Jensen (FG) is an Orthodox priest (Orthodox Church in America) and is currently serving as chaplain of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison WI. Father Jensen has prepared numerous articles in the field of Christian Psychology, as well as advancing the influential and unique work of the late Adrian Van Kaam of Duquesne University. Father Gregory can be reached at jensen.gregory@gmail.com. Brandon L. Sehein (BS) is a clinical therapist at a private practice (The Next Step Counseling Services) in Elizabethtown, KY, and he also serves as Senior Pastor of Lucas Grove Baptist Church, Upton KY. Reverend Sehein has pursued numerous interests in the psychological fields of Eastern Orthodoxy, and he can be reached at brandonsehein@netzero.net.

BS: Father Gregory, could you share a little of your journey with your pursuits of psychology and how Eastern Orthodoxy has played a role in your current understanding? It also may be helpful to hear from you what you believe Eastern Orthodoxy has to uniquely contribute to the therapeutic reality of helping people.

FG: First of all thank you for the opportunity to have this conversation. In my experience, psychologists are not always open to the anthropological insights that Christian theology brings to a critical understanding of psychology and psychotherapy. Even among those members of the profession who are open, as an Eastern Orthodox priest I'm still a bit on the outside.

I'm not really sure how to answer your question. My interest in psychology predates my life as an Orthodox Christian and my ministry as a priest. Psychology was actually the road I followed to the Orthodox Church and eventually to the priesthood. For several years I worked in various mental health settings as a research assistant, as a paraprofessional counselor, a caseworker, and a therapist.

Very early on, and this was confirmed for me later when I studied with Adrian van Kaam, it became clear to me that for psychology to fulfill its own aspirations for the human person, it requires theology. Or at least it needs what van Kaam calls a pre-empirical and trans-empirical anthropology. Psychology as an empirical science can do a very good job of filling in the details of human life. What it can't do is provide the overarching framework—the *telos*—for human life. For this you need to look to theology or philosophy.

Within the tradition of the Orthodox Church,

illness (whether physical or emotional) is a profoundly moral reality. All illness is the result of human sinfulness; it is not, however, a punishment for sin. Rather illness is an expression of divine mercy. Like physical illness, mental illness is a symptom of our true suffering—sin—our damaged communion with the Holy Trinity. It is also, and again like bodily suffering, an invitation to repentance.

Moving from psychology as an empirical science to psychotherapy as an applied discipline, I think that when psychotherapy is most fully itself, it is a form of cognitive and emotional asceticism. Look at Trader's article in this issue. He does a masterful job of pointing out the parallels between cognitive therapy and the ascetical practice of the Orthodox Christian monastic life.

But why does this parallel matter?

Until very recently, all Christian traditions—Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Reformed, Anabapist, and the rest—had an ascetical component. Yes, Christians in different traditions would sometimes disagree among ourselves as to the content, but in the main we shared an ascetical sensibility. Behavior and character shape each other.

As an Orthodox Christian, I would certainly affirm the ascetical impulse I see in psychotherapy, but argue that it needs to build on personal repentance, the grace of the sacraments, and the life of the Church. This last point, I think, is critical—the pathos of human sinfulness, our true psychopathology, is radical individualism, the idea that I can live without others. Empirically and ontologically, this is nonsense, and to the degree that the therapist and the client work together, they demonstrate tangibly that true and enduring healing only happens through

communion even if psychotherapy and psychology as such can't provide that communion in a full sense.

Finally, to return to what I said above, I think secular psychology and psychotherapy can be helpful, but they aren't essential to either human flourishing in general or the a life lived in accord with the fullness of the Christian tradition. My namesake, St Gregory Palamas, said that getting wisdom from philosophy is like getting medicine from a poisonous snake—it can be done, but it is hard and dangerous. Likewise with psychotherapy, we can experience healing through psychotherapy, but it hard and fraught with moral dangers.

BS: How does your Eastern Orthodox perspectives of anthropology shape the way you engage the secular understandings humanity and its problems?

FG: As I've allude to a moment ago, my own anthropology is ascetical and liturgical. Because of human sinfulness, I need to be trained not just in moral goodness (virtue), but in being the person God created me to be. To borrow from Thomas Merton, my "true self" is hidden in the Most Holy Trinity, and it is only in and through Christ that I can be the person God has created me to be. As a practical matter, this means that I must turn continually to Christ to discover myself. This is precisely what I do in my personal asceticism and through participation in the sacraments.

As for the secular understandings of humanity, it's precisely because we understand ourselves as "secular," as beings for whom God is (at best) one option among many, that we are in the state we're in. The late Orthodox theologian Fr Alexander Schmemman goes so far as to define (rightly, I think) contemporary secularism as both a Christian heresy and the essence of what it means to be fallen human.

When God becomes merely one option among many, even if He is the BEST option, human life becomes a series of problems. Emmanuel Levinas argues that human knowledge always requires an act of abstraction. In terms of human relationships, this means that I minimize or ignore anything about you that doesn't "fit" with my idea of you. In the moral order, I likewise dismiss anything that contradicts my abstract vision of how life ought to be. When I do this, I live ideologically rather than by faith in response to divine grace, and my neighbor (human or divine) becomes my enemy precisely because his very presence threatens the artificial integrity of my theory of the world of persons, events, and things. To use more classical psychoanalytic language, neurosis is the hallmark of a life of impaired communion with God, neighbor, creation, and self.

So as an Orthodox Christian I would argue that there is in the strict sense no secular understanding of reality. There is either a life of ideological self-delusion, of neurotic striving, or a life of faith and hope rooted in a loving relationship with the Most Holy Trinity and in the Trinity with the whole *cosmos*.

This is why asceticism and liturgy are essential to the Christian life. The ascetical component is focused on helping me overcome, repent really, of a life centered on my self-aggrandizing and abstract thoughts **about** life. Asceticism in this sense is the foundation of all, healthy human religion. Why? Because human beings are fundamentally ascetical creatures.

As for the liturgical dimension, it is only in and through the sacraments that this general human impulse is perfected. All human beings fast, for example, even if we fast for a wide range of reasons. Orthodox Christians fast in order to prepare ourselves to offer ourselves to God the Father in the Eucharist and, again in the Eucharist, to receive back in the reception of Holy Communion our lives transfigured by the Holy Spirit into the life of Christ.

BS: What are your thoughts on the various attempts at engaging the secular realms of psychology by such influential Eastern Orthodox minds such as Father Alexis Trader, Archbishop Chrysostomos, and Stephen Muse?

FG: I have mixed emotions about all of these attempts. As an intellectual puzzle, I find the work they have all done really very interesting. But in all three of these men, there is not a foundational, anthropological analysis of psychology. I think Trader comes close, but he still takes a pragmatic approach to psychology. Yes there are many, many practical points of convergence between psychology and Christian spirituality. For most people this practical agreement isn't even a question.

But as Chesterton points out somewhere, we get it backwards when we say that we all basically agree on the goal of life; we just disagree on the means. In fact, most human beings agree on the practical details of how to live—be kind, be forgiving, be tolerant, etc.—what we disagree about is *why* we ought to be kind or forgiving or tolerant and so ultimately what these all mean.

Recently, I've been reading a fair amount of economic theory, and in one of the essays I found a provocative observation. Basically the author argues that pragmatism is the ethical philosophy of totalitarianism. The lessons for Christians working in psychology—either as clinicians or in my case as theoreticians—is that an agreement in practical matters can—and often does—conceal deeper points of divergence and disagreement. We always need to explore systematically the anthropological difference between the various schools of psychology and the Christian tradition.

The second century apologist St Justin Martyr said that Christ is seminally present in all people. Whatever is true is true precisely because of the sacramental presence of Christ. It belongs to us as Christians first to discern and then to nurture that seed of divine grace in psychology or any other so-called "secular" field of human knowledge.

Based on my experience, however, I'm not sure that there is much interest—even among Christian psychologists—in applying Justin Martyr's model to psychology and psychotherapy. Again, there is real value to be found in contemporary psychology as an empirical science and the various schools of psychotherapy as applied disciplines. At the same time, contemporary psychology and psychotherapy, like philosophy during Justin's time, offers a beatitude that it simply can't provide. Yes, to a starving man, thin gruel will seem a feast, but there is better food to be had.

Again I think that Trader, Chrysostomos, and Muse are all are to be commended for tackling secular psychology; their work is valuable, but I don't think their work is sufficient. There still remains a need to examine the epistemological and anthropological presuppositions of secular psychology.

BS: It is understood that you studied the thought and work of Adrian van Kaam and his contribution to personality theory at Duquesne University. Could you share a little bit of the significance of this Formative Spirituality and how it has affected your perspectives in this field, and maybe also a little of what it still has to offer today?

FG: Most of the themes I've raised here are the fruit of my studying with the late Adrian van Kaam. Both van Kaam's work and his personal witness have a great deal to offer both psychology and Christian pastoral ministry, especially the ministries of spiritual direction and spiritual formation. A quick history of van Kaam's life is probably the best way to introduce him to folks.

Fr. van Kaam was a Roman Catholic priest and a clinical psychologist. He did his doctoral studies under Carl Rogers and was instrumental in establishing a psychology department with an existential-phenomenological approach. But especially because of his experiences in Holland during and immediately after World War II, van Kaam was primarily concerned with how to help people live what he would later call a distinctively human, rather than a merely human, form of life. In this, I think van Kaam anticipated by several decades the work now being done in positive psychology.

Both van Kaam and positive psychology draw from classical Christian and non-Christian sources. But unlike the more secular orientation of positive psychology, van Kaam was specifically concerned with developing a personality theory to help foster Christian spirituality. In other words, van Kaam's personality theory is at the service of Christian spirituality rather than the other way around, as it is with positive psychology. Another way to put this is that van Kaam's personality theory (formation science) takes the Christian saint as the normative expression of what it means to be fully and truly human.

Eventually van Kaam's religious interests

resulted in his establishing a free standing program at Duquesne—the Institute of Man (renamed the Institute of Formative Spirituality in the early 1980's). Here van Kaam continued his work in developing formation science and its practical application to human life (formative spirituality). What is unique about van Kaam's work is that he sought as well to develop a research methodology that allowed scholars to bring a rigorous and systematic human science approach to the study of spirituality. And again, rather than see spirituality as a facet of human personality, he saw personality in terms of the spiritual life.

For psychologists interested in spirituality and spiritual formation, van Kaam's work is a rich source of insight. Too frequently, if I might be critical for a moment, the work of spiritual formation is entrusted to psychologists who simply don't have the professional competence for the work. While I certainly appreciate their good intentions, it is too easy to reduce spiritual formation to merely a matter of psychological development with a thin Christian gloss. As I've suggested above, psychology has an important role to play in Christian spirituality, BUT our understanding of psychology must be critically informed by not only the Scriptures, but also the broad range of philosophical and theological thought and the living witness of the Christian tradition. Van Kaam's work is of great value in doing just this.

Let me make a very bold statement: Van Kaam's work in formation science and formative spirituality is what psychology ought to be—or at least ought to be if we take seriously not only the Christian tradition but the best insights of Modern and Postmodern philosophy and the findings of the natural, social, and human sciences. To be frank, contemporary psychology in adopting a natural science model as the basis for a science of human thought and behavior is ultimately a futile undertaking. Human beings are fundamentally moral and religious, and empirical, quantitative research is an insufficient tool to understand human beings in our fullness. The human science movement and later humanistic, existential and phenomenological approaches to psychology have done much to correct the bias of the natural science approach. But even among qualitative approaches, morality, religion, spiritual, and especially the Christian tradition, are not given a substantive voice.

For me the sad thing about van Kaam's work is that it is precisely his fidelity to the Gospel and science that lead to his work being marginalized. For example, more than once I've been commended for wanting to bring a psychological perspective to pastoral ministry or spiritual direction. Where I always get push back is when I argue that, following van Kaam, for psychology to be true to itself, it needs to accept (among other things) the anthropological and moral critique of Christian theology. To put it in stark terms of academic disciplines, the psychologist will happily critique the theologian, and the theologian will even happily accept the critique. But

it is the rare psychologist who will accept critique from the theologian. What makes van Kaam and his work so important, is that he not only accepted the theological critique, he partnered with theology to create an academic and applied discipline that more faithfully reflects and serve what it means to be truly and fully human.

Review of Lanham (2005)

A Guide to Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science, Theology, and Spiritual Practice Behind It and Its Clinical Application

Lydia Kim-van Daalen, Urbana Theological Seminary

Invitation:

Readers of *Edification* are invited to submit reviews of books that they have found stimulating and that fit into the discussion of Christian Psychology. Please contact the book review editor to explore this possibility. The book review editor of *Edification* is Lydia Kim-van Daalen. Her email address is lydiakim.vd@gmail.com.

Archbishop Chrysostomos. (2007). *A Guide to Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science, Theology, and Spiritual Practice Behind It and Its Clinical Application* by. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. 124 pp. \$31.50 (Reviewed by Eric L. Johnson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He can be reached at ejohnson@sbts.edu)

As a Christian psychology advocate, I am eager to discover psychologists or psychotherapists who are doing work that is deeply reflective of their own distinctive Christian tradition. My relative lack of familiarity with Eastern Orthodoxy (EO) and basic lack of awareness of what Orthodox psychologists and psychotherapists are doing is such that I have long wondered what Orthodox psychotherapy would look like. As a result, I was glad to discover not too long ago the present book, which gave me the opportunity to sample the reflections of a leader in the Orthodox Church who appears to be on the cutting edge of such reflection. He is well qualified. The Archbishop is Senior Research Scholar at the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies and he received a Ph.D. in psychology from Princeton University.

After a brief introductory chapter, the author seeks to place the rest of the book in the context of the continuing skepticism regarding the validity of religion among some intellectuals in our culture and research over the past few decades on the relationship between religious practice and mental health (relying especially on Koenig & Larson's great work), concluding that there is good scientific evidence that religion has a legitimate role to play in helping people cope with mental illness. Along the way he demonstrates a familiarity with contemporary psychology and psychotherapy, as well as the classical views of Freud and Jung. He notably touches on religious and scientific interpretations of demon possession (pp. 18-21), and finishes by giving the reader a small window into related issues in contemporary Greece, presumably of importance to the EO community (pp. 25-29). The Archbishop

appears to share the perspective of many today regarding the relation between science and religion, in which they are seen as separate, autonomous cultural spheres whose representatives should nevertheless dialogue and look for "common ground" (p. 2). Such discussions have a strategic role to play in contemporary culture where religious views seem rarely to be taken seriously. However, one might question the rather sharp separation between religion and science (or any other cultural activity) that such dialogues assume, for two reasons. First, because the assumption of two autonomous spheres seems likely to inhibit a closer and more substantive relationship. Second, because theology, like philosophy, could be considered a metadiscipline, that is, a discipline with epistemological and transformational significance that transcends its own disciplinary boundaries, so that it may legitimately impact other disciplines, one might argue, especially the human sciences, at least among Christians.

Next, the Archbishop presents an overview of the theological distinctives of Orthodoxy relevant to psychotherapy. Much time is spent on EO biblical anthropology, spending more time on the formulations of the early Greek Church regarding the two natures of Christ than I have would have expected. EO considers humans to be constituted of body and soul, and they take the body very seriously. Though they believe the body is inferior to the soul, because the latter is immortal, they understand the soul to pervade "the entire body" (p. 37). The soul is composed of powers (like the heart, intellect, conscience, and will), which in turn have their respective activities (for example, emotions, thoughts, desires, volition; pp. 37-38). Humans are now in a degraded condition, because of the disobedience of the first humans, but EO has a somewhat more optimistic view of human nature after the Fall than Western Christians. Because humans are still in the image of God, for example, EO apparently believes they are still able to acquire greater likeness to God by "their own efforts (assisted of course by the grace of God)" (p. 44). I was surprised to learn, nonetheless,

that, following Gregory Palamas and Gregory of Nyssa, EO believes that sexuality, conception, and birth are a result of the Fall (p. 42).

Divine salvation figures prominently in EO theology. However, the focus is more on Christ's incarnation than on his atonement for sin (as in the West, particularly the judicial removal of God's wrath). The *person* of Christ, rather than his work, seems to be central to the EO understanding of salvation. By becoming human and resurrected, the Son of God freed humans from the curse of sin and made it possible for them to be restored to their original freedom and capacity to follow God. Christ is considered "the divine Archetype" of human being, "restored to his proper and God-ordained path to perfection and divinization" (p. 63).

Divinization is one of the most important and distinguishing features of EO (also called deification). It refers to the gradual transformation of believers by God's grace into greater likeness to God. In the past, Western Christianity has tended to avoid this term, out of concern that it conveys a transformation into the essence of God. Yet that is not at all what divinization means. EO totally affirms what Westerners have called the Creator-creature distinction. However, humans *can* become more *like* him. Such a concept is related to psychotherapy. Archbishop Chrysostomos accordingly discusses it at some length. The body, significantly, is involved in divinization, as well as the mind, which is cleansed of sinful thoughts in the pursuit of God. Though one can imagine how all this is related to psychotherapy, one might have wished more direct links were made within this exclusively "theological" discussion.

Such connections as were made were left to the next chapter, which focused on EO spiritual practices, particularly Hesychasm. The chapter begins with a lengthy introduction to Gregory Palamas, a primary exponent of Hesychasm, and some of the controversies both within and without EO surrounding this practice. The Greek word *hesychia* means silence or stillness, and it was applied to practices that aimed at producing an interior tranquility in the presence of God, focusing on the "Jesus prayer," corresponding breathing patterns, and watchfulness over one's inner life. The Jesus Prayer has many variations, but the standard form is "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Interest in breathing is somewhat unusual in the Christian tradition, but it illustrates one way the body can be attended to and incorporated into one's relationship with God. According to the Archbishop, Hesychasm generally leads to a healing of the mind by "returning it to the heart," purification from sin, *apatheia* (or freedom from dominating passions), participation in divine grace, and greater conformity to the likeness of God, all of which have therapeutic implications. Other related spiritual practices favored in EO include prayer, fasting, vigils (prayer throughout the night), spiritual reading, chanting, taking the Eucharist, observing the church calendar,

monitoring and controlling one's thoughts and passions, and good works (a biblical word [Eph 2:10]), Protestants should note).

In an era when the Buddhist practice of mindfulness has become widely investigated and hailed by secularists as a therapeutic intervention in mainstream Western psychology, one suspects that the therapeutic value of Hesychasm could be just as easily documented with empirical research. Though prayer using the name of Jesus will raise eyebrows among some mainstream psychologists, it is hoped that EO researchers will conduct and publish a number of such studies in the near future.

The book concludes with a chapter of significant qualifications regarding Orthodox psychotherapy. Trained in modern psychology and its methods, Archbishop Chrysostomos is careful not to claim too much. For example, he says "it would be wrong and misleading to suggest that Orthodox psychotherapy has, as its *fundamental goal*, the treatment of psychological disorders or the specific concerns of the clinic and the secular therapist" (p. 100). The focus is on *spiritual*, rather than psychological, healing. Yet I wondered, in this chapter, if the Archbishop was being more deferential to possible secular critics than was necessary, or than was implied by a book on Orthodox *psychotherapy* (and not spiritual direction). Its aim, we are told, is "to unite the human being, body and soul, . . . to the Divine Energies and to restore the human being to a potential state of perfection . . ." (p. 100-101). There are good reasons to believe that such an agenda would have clinical implications and could address aspects of a host of psychological disorders—at least as much as mindfulness is doing today—providing it was wisely and carefully adapted to such use. And why not? It felt like an overly firm division between religion/spirituality and psychology/psychotherapy might be leading to an understatement of the potential utility and value of what the EO tradition has to offer mainstream psychology, especially for therapists and their clients within the Christian community. Perhaps 10 years from now, should mainstream psychology open up more to Christian practices (the way it has to Buddhist terms and practices), and adequate studies were done on the efficacy of Orthodox psychotherapy, it could become an accepted therapeutic orientation. I sure hope so.

A few minor weaknesses might be noted. At times, it felt like the tone was a little heavy-handed in criticism of those with whom the author disagreed, both ancient and contemporary. Perhaps the book was written more for EO insiders than outsiders, but in my opinion, the value of the book was undercut somewhat for a non-EO Christian like myself by more attention to rather detailed historical discussions of Orthodox figures and controversies than would be of interest to those outside the tradition. Of greater significance: I would have liked to see greater emphasis on the role of Scripture in the healing process, which undoubtedly is important in EO, but perhaps not *as*

important as in my reformational Christian tradition. Nevertheless, I was encouraged by the book to consider more seriously the importance of the person of Christ to the anthropology and soteriology that shape a Christian psychology, to appreciate the role of Christian meditation in therapy, and to praise God for the unique contributions of Eastern Orthodoxy to Christian psychotherapy. Archbishop Chrysostomos has written an impressive bridge-building book, and it is hoped that this important project will continue to advance.

Hopko, T. (2006). *Christian faith and same-sex attraction: Eastern Orthodox reflections*. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press. 128 pages. \$12.95. (Reviewed by Philip Henry, Palm Beach Atlantic University, FL. He can be reached at philip_henry@pba.edu)

Christian Faith and Same Sex Attraction: Eastern Orthodox Reflections by Thomas Hopko offers a unique, insightful and helpful perspective on the issues surrounding homosexuality and contemporary western culture. *Perspective* is the key word here. Just as objects that are close appear to be bigger, and seem to change in size as we move away from them, the issue of homosexuality and context change as we back away and see them from an Eastern Orthodox tradition.

Eastern Orthodox tradition's perspective permeates the book from beginning to end. Even the structure of the book is governed by its rule. For instance, Hopko does not actually address same sex attraction directly in the first three chapters of the book (even though the first chapter is titled "Christ and Same Sex Attraction"). Instead, the first chapters focus on the themes of Christ (everything for everyone), Christ and the church, creation, the fall and redemption. Only then, having given us appropriate distance, does Hopko begin to talk about same sex attraction. It is as if he is saying, "You are too close, back up, see the whole picture from history and from what is really important, and then you can tackle the issue of homosexuality. When you are too close and the issue is right in front of your face, you cannot really see it." Hopko starts with a theology of the genesis of all things, and then adds the lens of Christology before addressing the issue of homosexuality. All that follows these first chapters is organized and birthed from this Eastern Orthodox perspective.

The Eastern Orthodox Perspective

What does this perspective do? First, it erases the myth of the uniqueness of homosexuality. From the Eastern Orthodox position, homosexuality or even sexuality for that matter is not to be the organizing principle in humans' lives. Christ is to be the center. Christ and His church and their actions in the world are to be prominent. The story of creation, fall and

redemption is the great theme and overriding plot in which the story of the world is being played out. Same sex attraction must find its place within this story rather than a renegade story left to run on its own. This is very different from our culture where individuals define themselves as "straight" or "gay", and where issues of same sex marriage, homosexuality in the ministry and same sex ordination have become "hot topics" in the forefront. What Hopko seems to be saying is that, from an Eastern Orthodox tradition, the origin and order of things matter. Putting things in the right place helps in knowing how and when to address them.

Second, this perspective gives a foundation for understanding of the world as to its original purpose, which in turn sets the overall contextual meaning for understanding same sex attraction. Hopko (2006) highlights several quotes from the New Testament, starting with the original purpose of creation: to glorify Christ that He might be first place in everything (Col. 1: 15, 18). He goes on to say

In a word, the crucified Christ, who is raised from the dead and enthroned at the right hand of the Father, is for Orthodox Christianity everything for everyone. He is the victorious God and Lord who is "all and in all" (ta panta kai en pasin Christos). (p. 8)

Any behavior, any action by any creature must be measured by the original intent of that action by that created creature with its ultimate connection to Christ. The original purpose of sex, according to Hopko's interpretation of Eastern Orthodox theology, was first to honor Christ and be a physical representation of Christ and the church, and then to be a model of the one flesh connection, to be life-creating and to be edifying to those involved. For a sexual relationship to meet the criteria for righteous behavior, it must pass this test.

Third, this perspective reminds us of the reality of evil. Eastern Orthodoxy, Hopko reminds us, views all things except for God as created things, all of which, including evil powers, were created good. The "badness" of things proceeds from their use for other than their original purpose. A secondary purpose which supersedes the original intent of the creator is at the heart of evil. When this happens, chaos and sin are the natural result. This may appear as a naive wandering from the path, but often takes a more direct form, which is outright rebellion against God.

Eastern Orthodoxy sees homosexuality as a departing from the original purpose. Incidentally, Hopko notes that homosexuality did not exist before the fall and as such is a product of the fall. Evil as such is seen as a parasite, never producing life itself, but living off of what has life and having a secondary life not equaling the life found in the original intent. Hopko's primary point is that sexual intercourse between people of the same sex is incapable of expressing divine love because of the incapability of human beings of the same sex to be sexually unified in a mutually fulfilling and complementary life-

creating and life-enhancing manner. (p.44)

How then should a Christian with same sex attractions deal with those attractions?

A second theme from Eastern Orthodoxy that Hopko reiterates throughout every chapter of the book is that same sex attraction is not that much different from other barriers on the road to sanctification. In short, when he outlines how to address same sex attraction he does so not from the sole context of avoiding it or resisting it, although this is certainly mentioned, but the focus here is on *how to get a life and live it*. Here are some simple, practical suggestions that Hopko posits to aid individuals and change the focus and direction of life:

1. Prayer and the liturgy
2. Bible study, especially the Psalms and the New Testament
3. The writings of Christian saints
4. Periodic silence (inside and out)
5. Periodic abstinence (inside and out)
6. Wholesome occupations for the good of others
7. Guarding of the senses
8. Sharing possessions with others
9. Give: support missionary, philanthropic and pastoral work
10. Crucify the flesh: doing whatever it takes to get appetites under control
11. Never give up: failure and struggle are a part of the journey.

Struggling with same sex attraction then is not a sign of homosexual identification, but of the possibility of spiritual advancement. For those who are familiar with Solution Focused Therapy (Lipchik and Rey 2011) there are elements of that kind of a change in thinking and perspective. Like Solution Focused Therapy, Hopko's insistence on doing something different, changing the perspective, admitting the emotional truth and focusing on what needs to be present often has a powerful effect. A life, like a house, is built by choices. Simple things like dealing with sadness and mourning, finding work that matters, and finding non-sexual intimacy and friendship are all examples of these simple choices. For those who have same sex attraction, as for all Christians, the question is what will organize life choices.

One weakness of the book that should be noted here is that, while these helpful practices are mentioned, they are presented in skeletal form. That is, each element of change has a nugget of truth from which to proceed; however, it is clear that instruction in discipleship and/or counseling are not Hopko's goal.

Same sex attraction theology, counseling and the Christian community

Christian Faith and Same Sex Attraction: Eastern Orthodox Reflections suggests that an application of the principles of Eastern Orthodoxy has implications for

theology, counseling and the Christian community as a whole. Same sex attractions are allowed by God (his permissive will) and as such must be *accepted* as "a most significant battle" which ultimately, if won, will give glory to God and "save their souls". Others have sickness, suffering, and other difficulties to battle, which are permitted by God throughout their lives. Same sex attraction is not in this view something to get rid of, but something that shapes individuals and is a part of their sanctification and deification. Their dealing with erotic sexual desires and the desire to be loved is to be surrendered to fulfill Romans 1's call to be living sacrifices that are not conformed to this world.

Hopko sees same sex attractions, then, as a *cross* to bear, not a gift to be celebrated. The person who wishes to address same sex attraction must come to terms with sin. First their own sin, even from an early age where patterns begin. And, not only their own sin, but the sin of those who have preceded them, perhaps even before their birth. Hopko states that:

It demands that one deal bravely and honestly with one's history, family, religion, culture, and nation. It requires painful remembering, blessed mourning, sincere forgiving, ceaseless praying and courageous acceptance of one's providential destiny caused and conditioned by sin. It demands a firm and unwavering resolve to take full responsibility before God for one's desire and action. (p.48)

He goes on to say that forgiveness must be a part of this process.

Working daily with those in recovery, I cannot help but think of the parallel process for those using the 12 Steps. In particular, the fourth step, making a searching and fearless moral inventory, seems to contain many of the same elements. The inward assessment and even words like acceptance, courage, responsibility, and the focus on forgiveness seem to be remarkably similar. The way of sanctity, according to Hopko, is not found in fate, but in ascetical transformation by God.

For counselors, Hopko sees the first goal of counseling as to *build up a communion of trust and mutual understanding* that would allow the individual to share openly and truthfully without fear. Then follow identification, respect, listening, putting oneself in others' place, feeling others' pain and suffering, and advocating for them before God. And, always along the way, the temptation to oversimplify needs to be resisted. Those who counsel must love, have discernment, listen and hear, but also be aware of the unseen warfare against the evil one and the positive healing of interaction with others in the church. Hopko's advice to counselors assumes that the reader has knowledge of theology, discipleship training and at least a basic rudimentary skill of how to proceed in counseling. One added note is that the broad overall focus is applied at times to the counselor and at times to the person being counseled. This dichotomous focus makes application more difficult.

Hopko seeks to find balance of love and truth

with the issues that have become so contested in our Western culture. He suggests that those who are actively engaged in homosexual activity deserve to be treated fairly, protected by laws, and have basic civil rights. However, he would deny them the sacraments. Hopko advocates prayerful, helpful interaction but acknowledges that many cultures, particularly western culture, will not understand Eastern Orthodox thinking on the issue of same sex attraction or the implications. He quotes Saint Anthony the Great who predicted: A time is coming when (people) will go mad and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack (them) saying, “you are mad, you are not like us” (p. 57).

In the final analysis, Hopko's book, *Christian Faith and Same Sex Attraction: Eastern Orthodox Reflections*, offers a refreshing perspective on same sex attraction that puts it into contexts that enable fresh thinking from old wisdom. It is theologically clear without being judgmental or proud; it is loving without being lackadaisical or permissive, and it is courageous while being kind.

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One of the most important of the many agendas of a Christian psychology is *retrieval*, the recovery of the psychology of classic, orthodox Christianity. We engage in this, not because we are uninterested in contemporary psychology or in doing empirical research, but because a deep familiarity and reinvestment in Christianity's own historic psychology is the only way to cultivate a psychology that is true to the genius, spirit, and core teachings of Christianity. An intellectual tradition must ever develop new insights if it is to remain a vigorous, living tradition, but it just as surely cannot neglect its own unique resources if it is to remain alive. Indeed, retrieval from one's intellectual tradition is important from a purely pragmatic standpoint (that even open-minded moderns could appreciate): such rediscovery and reinvestment will bring long-lost insights into the human condition into the present, which can then be explored and subjected to research.

I confess to having less familiarity with the Eastern Orthodox tradition than with the Western traditions of the church (the Reformational—my

own—and the Roman Catholic). One reason for this neglect is that there has simply been much less of this tradition that has been written or translated into English. Nonetheless, this tradition is alive and active, evident in a current renewed interest in its own past psychology, a contemporary engagement with mainstream psychology, as well as some creative articulations of a genuinely Eastern Orthodox version of psychotherapy.

The book reviewed here belongs to the first category, concentrating on what today is called psychopathology. Written in French by Jean-Claude Larchet (1949-present), an Orthodox researcher and expert on the early church, the book is part of a trilogy that explores the early Eastern church's teachings on physical, psychosocial, ethical, and spiritual disorders. The current volume was originally published in 1992. The introduction demonstrates the author's wary knowledge of the contemporary psychology of its day—not masterful, but respectable—and includes a preview of the rest of the book.

The first chapter summarizes the early Eastern church's complex understanding of human nature and what goes wrong in psychological maladies. The Greek Fathers assumed a strong unity of body and soul, created together to form the one substance of human nature. This contrasts with the Neoplatonic dualism common in that era that emphasized more the dichotomy between body and soul. The Greek Fathers generally believed that body and soul are both mysteriously involved in bodily movements, actions, emotions, and pain and pleasure, as well as in sin. Yet a “soft” dualism is evident in their tendency to consider the body as an instrument of the soul, and that the soul is ultimately independent of the body, since it can live without it in heaven. The Fathers commonly distinguished three kinds of powers intrinsic to the human soul: vegetative, animal, and human. The vegetative includes the tendency to grow and reproduce, whereas the animal includes appetites, perception, aggressiveness, and the emotions. The human encompasses reason, consciousness, conscience, the will, language, and memory. It is also the latter that can unite humans to God. The range of the capacities considered shows the complexity of their psychology. However, the tripartite classification, common in the early and medieval church, is based on very broad observations about the created order and would seem to add nothing substantial to our understanding of these capacities. It may be better to jettison that categorization scheme and more simply recognize and appreciate the common createdness that constitutes and unifies the relative differences in the complexity of these capacities.

Based on this complex psychology, the Orthodox Fathers recognized three sources of psychological problems: somatic, demonic, and spiritual. Regarding somatic causes they largely accepted the Homeric-Galenic theories common in their day, that the mind's functioning could be impaired by bodily disease, insult, and imbalance, resulting

in hallucinations, thought disorders, melancholy, mania, and full-blown insanity. For such problems, physical remedies were necessary.

In the absence of somatic problems, the mind was able to function properly, but could still be hampered by demonic forces and spiritual difficulties. Being pastors and theologians, the Eastern fathers understandably gave most of their attention to the latter problems. Larchet points out, however, that belief in biological causality and demonic influence on mental disorders were entirely compatible, in spite of their awareness of the rejection of demonic activity by early naturalists (like Hippocrates). In fact, the fathers believed that demons affected persons through the body, which they could indwell, but they did not have immediate access to the soul. Such attacks could be due to personal sin or spiritual carelessness, rendered possible to the extent that the Christian's old self was allowed to reign. However, such attacks could also occur, as in the case of Job, simply as a result of God's permission for the purpose of spiritual testing. Regardless of the cause, the Fathers viewed those who were troubled by demons as fellow-sufferers and approached them, including the possessed, with compassion and respect.

The treatment for demon possession is called exorcism, and it consisted of prayer in the name of Christ, and sometimes fasting, and required the strong faith of the one doing the exorcism. Those who were possessed would also be encouraged to participate in their healing, as much as possible, by their own prayer and fasting. The main sign of success would be the suddenness with which the person was healed, often accompanied by the one possessed crying out when the demon leaves.

The third category of psychopathology recognized by the Fathers had a *spiritual* or we might say an *ethicospiritual* origin. This is the only category in which the free will of the individual is implicated. Larchet suggests that the Fathers believed that some ethicospiritual problems were related to psychological conditions that today have special diagnostic labels. For example, the "passion of pride" was believed to be related to conditions today called "paranoia," "hysteria," and "narcissism;" anxiety and anguish can be due to the passions of fear and sadness; aggressiveness is due to the passion of anger; and depression may be a result of the passion of sadness or the sin of *acedia*. In their psychology, a passion was considered to be an unregulated emotion for which one was responsible, a notion largely absent in contemporary literature on the psychology of emotion. Contrary to the common sensibility today that emotions are outside of one's control, the Fathers had a keen awareness of personal culpability regarding the managements of one's emotions. For example, they believed that sadness could be a result of too strong an attachment to some creature that has been taken away, and holding on to resentment and a desire for revenge can cause extreme frustration and sadness. As John Chrysostom wrote, "Great is

the tyranny of sadness. It is an illness of the spirit that demands considerable strength to resist it courageously and to reject what is evil in it" (p. 100). Persons were considered responsible to not allow sadness to fester and turn into despair. Interestingly, there is some similarity between this assumption and the clinical awareness today that counselees can be taught how to regulate their emotions. Perhaps the greatest limitation in their assessment of passion, compared with contemporary psychological understanding, was their lack of awareness of the impact of one's developmental history on an adult's capacity to regulate emotions.

Of special interest is the sin of *acedia*, a problem to which monks apparently were particularly prone, especially around midday. A complex concept, it is often translated sloth—one of the seven deadly sins—but it can also refer to disgust, discouragement, and apathy, so it has also been associated with some forms of depression and sadness. It contributes to the loss of interest in everything, including spiritual activities.

How did the early Greek Fathers seek to alleviate the disorders they recognized? Treatment for sadness included first, being aware of the disorder, and second, being strongly motivated to overcome it. Finally, renunciation of one's creaturely attachments was understood to be pivotal to the cure. "Whoever has conquered the passions will never be dominated by sadness" (Evagrius, cited on p. 110). At the same time, Chrysostom recognized that sadness can be undermined by the presence of others, who can keep us from being overwhelmed by it, and can also mitigate it by their "soothing words," or "words of comfort" (p. 114).

With regard to anger, the Fathers understood that its ultimate source was not in the behavior of others or one's circumstances, but in oneself. They wisely recognized that it is therefore better for one's anger to be provoked in the course of one's life and relationships, so that one can work on it, than to avoid people and think one has conquered it, simply because it is not being activated. In order to overcome anger, they recommended prayer, reading and meditating upon Scripture, cultivating a meditative heart, constant watchfulness, and fellowship with others. A number of fathers encouraged Christians to "reframe" the offending person, not as an opponent, but as a physician sent to heal one's soul. Rather than focus on the sin of one's brother, one should accuse oneself of the sin in one's hostile reaction.

Treatment for *acedia* also required recognition of the disorder. This was especially important with *acedia*, because of its tendency to confuse the mind and to promote apathy. One should not give in to it, they advised, but rouse oneself to resist it; the more vigorously, the better. Contrary to sadness and anger, they believed that *acedia* is not overcome with the help of others. In fact, spending too much time with others, when one should be engaged in other activities may be a sign of *acedia*! So they encouraged people to fight it by oneself. They warned that one should be

prepared for a protracted struggle, since acedia is not overcome quickly. As remedies they recommended focusing on relevant verses from the Bible, the fear of God, sorrow over it, determined repentance, and bringing to mind the awareness that one could die at any moment. Fear of God and manual labor are also recommended. One can also fight acedia with verses from the Bible. Prayer was always advised to overcome sin, but especially in the case of acedia, because its intrinsic passivity made it obvious that it cannot be overcome without the grace of God, which one does not receive apart from asking for it. Larchet makes the observation that especially, "with these two examples of sadness and acedia we clearly see how the psychic is integrated into the spiritual plane, and is dependent on it for both etiology and treatment. But we also see how the spiritual dimension exceeds and transcends the psychic dimension" (pp.124-5).

The book concludes with a curious chapter on the "holy fool," a relatively rare personage in the early Greek church. Such individuals were not really fools at all (that is, mentally impaired or emotionally troubled), but they simply pretended to be so. This usually resulted in various kinds of ill-treatment. Their motives for this, according to the Fathers, were virtuous: they sought to exemplify and promote humility, complete freedom from vain-glory and human prestige, and detachment from this world. They aimed at a literal fulfillment of the description of Christians as "strangers" and "aliens" in this world. Since such labels can only be realized within a community, these "fools" tested the radicality of their Christian commitment in this social extremism. Another of their goals, according to Larchet, was the salvation of others by showing total disdain for this world and its honors. Finally, they sought to identify themselves and associate with "the least of these." They cared for the outcasts with whom they were necessarily thrown together. They generally showed love to prostitutes, beggars, the sick, and sinners of all kinds. Larchet affirms the "office" of the "holy fool," suggesting that it displays a hidden holy logic beneath the socially aberrant behavior. In order to become such a fool for Christ, he says, one must already be very spiritual and be called to it by God.

While contemporary Christians can recognize some Christian virtue and insight associated with this kind of person, many, perhaps especially those of a reformational perspective, would see it as a significant distortion of the Christian virtue ideal. It reminds one of the medieval tendency to engage in self-flagellation in order to gain the spiritual benefits promised for suffering. Such self-abnegation is a kind of denial of creation goodness in oneself and one's cultural norms. Moreover, it has seriously misunderstood God's design for sanctification by valorizing the pursuit of virtue in unvirtuous ways (e.g., by *pretending* madness). Larchet cites the case of Symeon who entered a woman's bedroom and began to undress, so that he would be treated as a rapist. This is problematic behavior by virtually any standard,

and many Christians would consider it sinful. A psychodynamic interpretation might also suspect it manifests some significantly unresolved unconscious issues. The wisdom and virtue that these holy fools were after is the recognition that God is especially glorified in believers who are seen as weak, foolish, and despised. But it undermines the Christian way of life to violate creational/cultural norms by acting so as to attain such status. Rather, such disapprobation comes inevitably to those who live holy lives among people who reject God's holiness, but should only be an *unintended* consequence.

There is much otherwise that commends the retrieving investigations found in this book. The world of contemporary psychology would benefit considerably from the broader perspective on psychopathology offered by this framework, even as the early church would have benefitted from contemporary insights into human development, psychological causality, and the biological influences on psychopathology. Humans are ethical and spiritual beings and a psychology that views them strictly as organisms, as does much of contemporary psychology, is assuming a truncated view of humanity. The Fathers recognized what we would call multifactorial causality, though they included factors left out of a naturalistic metaphysic (demonic and spiritual). Moreover, they recommended a number of therapeutic strategies that are widely used today (e.g., systematic desensitization). One need not agree with everything to appreciate that the Fathers offer Christian psychologists an essential corrective to naturalism in their basically sound Christian understanding of human beings.

At the same time, a contemporary Christian psychology should avoid an uncritical retrieval of its history, and there are some obvious limitations to the psychology of the early Greek church. One of the most serious was their assumption that *apatheia* is the Christian ideal (p. 157), a state that "consists in being purified of all passion" (p. 158). They, therefore, concluded that strong passions were necessarily sinful. A more holistic understanding of the emotions recognizes that some strong emotions are appropriate, even virtuous, responses to situations (e.g., anger in the face of injustice). Moreover, the portrayal of God in the Old Testament and of Jesus in the New precludes the possibility that *apatheia*, at least as was typically understood, is compatible with a flourishing life as an image of God.

In addition, the approach of the Greek Fathers to treatment tended towards the moralistic. Assuming this book is a valid overview, there was apparently comparatively little focus on the work of Christ and the believer's union with him in his death and resurrection. Christian therapeutic activity needs to be expressly and continuously grounded on the activity of God in Christ to be most effective. As a result, the therapy of the early church was less explicitly Christ-centered than it could have been and emphasized more the human side of the equation

than its avowed reliance on divine grace might suggest. Using contemporary categories, we might consider the kind of therapy approach represented in the writings of the early Greek Fathers to be a Christian version of cognitive behavioral therapy, strengthened by some Christian reality therapy or commitment therapy, because of its emphasis on human responsibility. This is helpful, as far as it goes, but there is therefore a lack of a depth understanding of the soul that we have come to appreciate over the past 150 years. Similarly, a contemporary reader is aware of the absence of an appreciation of the impact of earlier trauma or family-of-origin issues on adult psychopathology. It is unfair, of course, to criticize the Fathers for deficiencies due to their place in human history. The observation simply underscores why Christian psychologists prefer a careful synthesis of contemporary psychological knowledge with classic Christian knowledge, based on a Christian worldview, over a simple return to the past.

A few comments are also warranted with regard to the writing itself. The book could have been somewhat better organized. To cite just one example, the topic of demonic activity involved in sadness is addressed at some length in the chapter on spiritual disorders (pp. 97-101), in spite of a previous chapter on demonic influence. Moreover, individual sentences were sometimes ill-conceived (e.g., poor grammar or choice of vocabulary), but it was not possible to discern whether this was the fault of the author or the translator.

Nevertheless, the value of this book far outweighs its limitations. It is especially recommended that it be purchased by university and seminary libraries.

Harrison, Nonna Verna. (2010). *God's Many-Splendored Image: Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation*. Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic. 207 pages. \$22.99. (Reviewed by Christian D. Kettler, Friends University, Wichita, KS. He can be reached at kettler@friends.edu)

Books on theological anthropology tend to be too abstract and cut off from moorings in spiritual life and ministry. On the other hand, the recent spate of interest in spiritual formation rarely tends to have a robust theological foundation and depth in the great history of the church. Sister Nonna Verna Harrison, an Eastern Orthodox professor of church history at Saint Paul School of Theology, has provided an inviting book of both theological substance and pastoral sensitivity that will appeal to many audiences. Drawing primarily upon the great Eastern, Greek-speaking Fathers of the early church, the author features an alternative to those of us in the West that are nurtured on a heritage more indebted to Augustine and a Western emphasis on sin and the danger of human freedom. Harrison instead dramatizes our "wrong choices" and the need for "freely collaborating with God's grace" in becoming

"more and more like God, especially by sharing God's character and God's love" (p. 6), which makes her presentation of the Eastern Fathers important, yet also raises important critical questions for their appropriation in the church today.

The first of nine chapters is entitled "Freedom." Such a chapter is of obvious interest in our modern, secular world, yet it was an issue as well in the ancient world, a world dominated by slavery. "What is the purpose of being free?" the Fathers asked. As throughout their writings, the Fathers mined Genesis 1:26 on the image of God in humanity for answers, often finding a distinction, as Basil of Caesarea did, between the "image" we are given at creation and the "likeness," that is, what we do by free choice. So Gregory of Nyssa also can speak of "collaborating" with God, a spirituality that develops in early monastic communities. Mentioned rarely by Harrison is the contribution of John Cassian (c.360-435), the Eastern monk whose writings provided a "Semi-Pelagian" balance to Augustine and Pelagius, reflecting his teacher Evagrius Ponticus, whom Harrison does cite. This emphasis on God "enabling" humans through Christ will be a permanent heritage of monastic spirituality. "So ultimately we *can* choose to be transformed for the better though it takes work and persistence" (p. 26). But where is Christ in this?

We immediately come to the place of Christ in chapter two, "God and Christ," one of the best chapters. The Eastern Fathers stressed Christ as the one perfect image of God who came to restore the divine image in humanity. Key to this understanding is Irenaeus' doctrine of *recapitulation*, or "reheading" which Harrison interprets as "Christ has become the new leader of the whole, so potentially all people can choose to unite themselves with him . . ." (pp. 40-41). Did Adam, however, have the same "choice" to be the head of humanity? As Harrison quotes Irenaeus himself: Christ "raised in himself the fallen human, raising him above to the highest heaven, to the right hand of the Father's glory, as God had promised" (p. 42). However, this was apart from any "cooperation" with us, despite Harrison's argument.

"Spiritual Perception" is the title of chapter three, an excellent examination of how the Eastern Fathers preached and taught against class prejudice and hierarchy in Greco-Roman society. Particularly exemplar was the great preacher of Constantinople, John Chrysostom. Fearlessly proclaiming that our real identities are in Christ and not in this world, Chrysostom taught a theological anthropology that reveals that our roles on this earth are temporary. Certainly influenced by Platonic thought, but also the Bible in Genesis, Gregory of Nyssa and Irenaeus began a long tradition of seeking for the vision of God, because, as Irenaeus puts it, "the life of a human being is the vision of God" (p. 50). The two components of humanity, divine breath and earth, combine together to seek God. The whole of human life is preparing for this vision.

At the end of each chapter, the author brings in

contemporary stories to accent the relevance of the ancient writers' anthropology. In one case, teenagers who remember the attention they were given by a famous pianist are an illustration of "seeing people truly," as God sees us. Harrison also adds stories of wisdom and kindness from the desert mothers and fathers from the early monasteries that are powerful witnesses indeed.

One of the strengths of the book, and that of the anthropology of the Eastern Fathers in contrast to Augustine and the law and sin-centered anthropology of the West, is the attention to the good that human beings can do in terms of "Virtues and Humility," the title of chapter four. "An important part of the good news of Jesus Christ," the author contends, "is that human beings can become good and can do good for others, because God will help them" (p. 63). But does Christ only "help" us or "enable" us? Is he only an "instrument" of salvation or sanctification and not its substance? This is the critical question that occurs to those outside of the Eastern tradition.. What was the extent of the influence of their Christology on their theological anthropology? In this chapter virtue is seen in the distinction between the image and the likeness of God in humanity. For Dorotheus of Gaza, a sixth-century abbot, the image includes self-determination and the soul's immortality, but the likeness is greater, including virtues similar to those of God: mercy, kindness, and holiness. For Basil of Caesarea, the image is given at creation and the likeness is that which we acquire through free choice. "Become perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48) is the quoted injunction. And Harrison adds, this is what Paul means by "putting on Christ" as "the free gift of God . . . who enables us to become fully human" (p. 69). As the author admits, if these virtues are so "natural," why are they so "hard" to live (p. 72)? However, is "putting on Christ" more than just Christ "enabling" or "helping" us but includes our union with us, in fact, Christ taking our place, in his vicarious life and resurrection, so that I have been crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20)?

A contradiction, or at least a paradox, also seems to exist. Gregory of Nyssa can say, "every person is the painter of his own life, and choice is the craftsman of the work, and the virtues are the paints for producing the image" (p. 70). Yet in another place the author cites a lovely picture of God as the painter. Of course, Harrison's conclusion is synergy, or cooperation, grace and human freedom in an egalitarian relationship. But, again, what has happened to our Christology at this point? What is the place of Christ in our theological anthropology? This question cannot be more relevant for us today.

The chapter ends with the intriguing psychology of Evagrius Ponticus (fourth century) on the passions, much indebted to Platonism in dividing the soul and, therefore, recognizing a kind of "depth psychology" of the soul. So the intellect may turn to either vainglory or prudence; assertiveness to restless boredom or perseverance; desire to gluttony or

continence, etc.

Certainly a great contribution and strength of the theological anthropology of the Eastern Fathers was the grand dignity they put on humanity made in the image of God. The author makes this very relevant for today in chapter five, "Royal Dignity." Basil affirmed women in God's image in Genesis 1:27. Gregory of Nyssa had a vigorous critique of slavery based on the image of God in humanity. Gregory Nazianzus, while on a fundraising tour for the poor, preached on behalf of lepers because they were made in God's image, squarely appealing to a Christology that saw Christ in the leper:

"They have put on Christ in the inner person . . . Christ died for them as he did for us . . . They have been buried together with Christ, and have risen with him," and most of all, Matt 25:31-46, "Let us minister to Christ's needs, let us give Christ nourishment, let us clothe Christ, let us gather Christ in, let us show Christ honor . . . not just with gold and frankincense and myrrh, like the Magi . . . Let us give this gift to him through the needy, who today are cast down on ground . . ." (pp. 101-102).

At this point, Christology profoundly affected the Fathers' social ethics. The ministry of social ethics, we are reminded, is not a modern invention of the church, but based on the royal dignity we are given because we are made in the image of God.

Chapter six, "Embodiment," chapter seven, "In the Created World," and chapter nine, "Arts and Sciences" can all be seen in a wider perspective in which the author draws out in meaningful ways the implications of the image of God in humanity for the creation in which humanity lives. "Embodied" living certainly became important at an early stage in monastic history when monastic communities saw the importance of an ordered day of both prayer and work. Instead of the Western emphasis on Adam's individual fall and our inheritance from him, Gregory of Nyssa and Athanasius represent the Eastern view that the fall represents each human person's choice to turn away from God. For Gregory, once the mind is cut off from God, it cannot see the glory of God in material things. But this does not mean that matter in itself is sinful. Irenaeus is again the most helpful of the early Christian writers in speaking of how Christ embodies God's communion with humankind, being God's "Word" but also the means by which we "hear his voice with our own ears. It is by becoming imitators of his actions and doers of his words that we have communion with him" (p. 119).

Chapter seven continues this attention to creation under the title, "In the Created World," but awkwardly detours from the ancient patristic world to the medieval world of St. Francis of Assisi. Telling the (legendary?) tale of St. Francis taming the wolf from striking the city, as a way to discuss the concepts of "microcosm and mediator" seems to divert from the flow of a book on patristic anthropology. Yet the author quickly moves into the teaching of Maximus the Confessor, the later patristic writer who was very

influential in his teaching of humanity as microcosm and mediator. The human being is meant to be a microcosm, a representative of the universe in one human being, and a mediator, able to unite things with one another and God. Because of the fall, obviously, humanity failed in that task. Christ has done some tasks, represented by the virgin birth, resurrection appearances, and the ascension. But there are “human tasks” left for us to do: “fullness of virtue,” “love of God and neighbors,” “freedom from earthly attachments,” “angelic peace,” “contemplation of created realities” and “loving contemplation.” The final step is “deification,” becoming “like God,” which God completes. But the author stresses that we have failed to achieve even the first step, the fullness of virtue, “empowered” by Christ who “has restored the human vocation of cosmic priesthood” (Maximus) (p. 137). A charming case study follows, featuring the famous veterinarian James Herriot and then another about preserving a lake in Los Angeles that adds to the author’s practical and personal touch in the book. She concludes in the chapter: “Because we are made in God’s image, we humans are interconnected with every part of the universe, especially every part of earth’s biosphere, and we have power that reaches throughout the created world” (p. 145).

Is it problematic, however, in the summary of Maximus, that “human tasks” are separated from “Christ’s tasks”? Does Christ only “empower” us to do our human tasks? Where is the place for the continuing humanity of Christ, what T.F. Torrance has called the vicarious *humanity* of the ascended Christ, who has poured out his Spirit upon us, to abide with us and in us? Is this missing in such an anthropology?

Chapter eight, “Arts and Sciences,” seeks to find the place of wonder and discovery in the arts and the sciences as a way to understand patterns of God’s creative activity, including, as many have noted, in the wonder and mystery in the scientific enterprise of Albert Einstein. So also the painter perceives something others have not. This is particularly true in the grand tradition of the icon, so important in the Christian East. Icon, which means “image,” is that which the Orthodox thinker Pavel Florensky spoke of as not just “windows” but also as “doorways” through which holy faces enter into the empirical world (p. 163). These are not just pictures. Such an anthropology makes the church much larger and more profound than one may think. The wider Christian world can learn much here from the Christian East.

Speaking of the wider community that iconography introduces leads one to chapter nine on “Community.” The Cappadocian theologians, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea, interpreted the “let us” of Genesis one as the Trinity in community of persons. The monastic movement reflected this as a microcosm of shared life. Trinitarian theology manifests this in the leadership of the Father, in which the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Spirit are all equal, yet there is “leadership among equals” in the Father, which Harrison sees as a model for ministry. Some, however, question this Eastern emphasis on the “monarchy” of the Father as contrary to the importance of the *perichoresis*, or “mutual dwelling” between the three persons of the Trinity.

In the conclusion the author returns to Christ the image of God. Citing Athanasius, who speaks of Christ as both the Model and the Portrait Painter (p. 191), we see a broader patristic tradition than Harrison has previously noted. Christ is not just the exemplar we imitate but even “becomes the model who sits for the restoration of the divine image damaged by sin . . .” This seems to be an *ontological* tradition in patristic theological anthropology that the author could have explored further. This leads us into the issue of *theosis*, or “deification,” which she understandingly hesitates to discuss until the end because it is so easily misunderstood. Is not part of the misunderstanding that *theosis* is easily misunderstood apart from union with Christ, a sharing in the divine life? But she can ironically end with words that seem to cut against this tradition of synergism that this reviewer criticizes in this otherwise admirable book: “So the only way humans can share in divine life is by staying close to God, united with God, choosing what God chooses, doing along with God *what God is doing first* – (emphasis mine) and such activity is always grounded in love” (p. 193).

Entwistle, David N. (2010). *Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity: An Introduction to Worldview Issues, Philosophical Foundations, and Models of Integration. Second Edition.* 273 pp. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books., \$35.00. (Reviewed by Shannon Wolf, Ph.D Associate Professor, Master of Arts in Counseling, Dallas Baptist University. She can be reached at shannonw@dbu.edu)

There is no shortage of works on integrative approaches to psychology and counseling. Indeed, texts and articles that examine the integrative process abound. A recent addition to the impressive list is the second edition of *Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity: An Introduction to Worldview Issues, Philosophical Foundations, and Models of Integration*, authored by David Entwistle. While there are a variety of understandings of the integrative approach to counseling, this book differs from others in that it centers the discussion on foundational assumptions that make up a person’s worldview.

A licensed psychologist and professor of psychology at Malone University, Entwistle’s recently released text retains much of the content of his 2004 work; however, the new edition includes slight stylistic changes along with modifications to the layout. Although minor, these alterations allow for a more fluid presentation of the author’s integrative

approach. While the work is generally intended as a textbook for psychology and counseling majors, others in the mental health field might also find it an interesting and informative primer to integration. The text is more than a mere introduction; it is clearly a persuasive work aimed at swaying the reader toward a specific model of integration.

Entwistle opens his work by exploring the question of what makes one a Christian psychologist or Christian counselor. In his examination of this question, the author eloquently argues for Christians to glorify God in all areas of life. Rejecting the notion that faith should be segregated to specified areas, Entwistle posits, “[Christian faith] should permeate all of life, shaping our thoughts about our possessions, our livelihoods, our relationships, our thinking, and every facet of life” (p. 12). Indeed, this foundational understanding is woven throughout the text.

In working toward a definition of integration, the author cites Christian universities as the initiators of the integrative tradition. Liberal arts educators have sought to expose students to multiple perspectives of knowledge, including non-Christian ones, while promoting faith. For Entwistle, the result has been an artificial separation of faith and science. Citing the claim that all truth is God’s truth, he contends that there is unity in God’s creation and that science, when correctly understood, cannot resist revealing truth. Had faith and science never experienced a separation, integration would not be necessary. Therefore, he contends that integration is a faulty concept and the term *re-integration* would be more accurate.

It is within the context of providing definitions that Entwistle briefly mentions Robert Roberts and Eric Johnson and their work in Christian psychology. While valuing church tradition and the teachings of Scripture as enriching the Christian worldview, he incorrectly faults Christian psychology for lacking appropriate appreciation of scientific rigor. He also challenges the notion that the wisdom found in the writings of the early church fathers is a legitimate source for gaining knowledge about human nature, preferring to base his understanding on empirical research. Ultimately, he moves away from defining Christian psychology as a distinct approach to psychology, calling the approach both ambitious and unworkable (pp. 14-15). He, instead, prefers to define Christian psychology as “a commitment to a Christian worldview that shapes how psychology is studied and applied” (p. 14).

Entwistle wisely dedicates significant attention to the history of the scientific community and psychology specifically. He highlights the contributions made to the mental health field by notable individuals and Christian societies and includes an examination of the difficult relationship between the modern scientific community and the Christian community. It is here that Entwistle asserts that much of the debate over the integration of faith and science is a result of how one understands

this history, for it is out of this understanding that assumptions of how to address mental health issues are made. Consistent with Christian psychology and other views of integration, he insists that knowledge concerning human functioning can be gained from Scripture and science. Entwistle painstakingly presents his argument for the unity of truth. He maintains,

[P]sychology and theology can be seen as united under a common set of assumptions about the world. Given that their sources are rooted in the truths of God’s world, the fundamental unity of their domains is assumed. The limitations of their respective methodologies and of human thought in general guarantee that the conclusions in each field will not always fit nicely together, but the framework itself suggests that harmony is conceptually possible (p. 89).

Following a discussion on Christians in mental health, Entwistle introduces worldviews. Although he presents naturalism along with other predominant worldviews, he does not provide a full explanation of the assumptions that undergird naturalism. The omission is puzzling given that much of this author’s argument for integration is founded in naturalism. For this author, “[It] is important to distinguish between methodological naturalism and philosophical naturalism” (p. 49). This distinction, however, is not made in the text. He merely acknowledges that one exists. The author, a son of a medical missionary whose meal-time discussions focused on either bodily functions or matters of theology, appears to be unaware of how much his own foundational assumptions and values are influenced by a biological/empirical model.

Within the worldview discussion, Slife and Reber are credited for pointing out that bias against theism skews much of the research produced by the psychological community. It is unfortunate that Entwistle chooses not to explore more fully the general thesis of their work. While Entwistle recognizes that bias is a problem in the research community, he fails to adequately address its implications in the Christian counseling field. In their seminal work, Slife and Reber (2009) successfully argue that theism and naturalism are incompatible. They contend that the unity of truth posited by many in the mental health field assumes that research findings “should correct the beliefs generated through the worldview of theism” (2009). Entwistle, himself, argues for this very point. “There are psychological and theological interpretations that will need to be *rejected* and *modified* as the clarity of one book helps us to identify our misinterpretations of the other book, or to flesh out details that one book or the other does not supply” (p. 213). Continuing, Entwistle contends that as a result of human fallibility, assumptions that are foundational to the Christian worldview are often limited or in error. Thus, science is needed to correct faulty understandings. It is exactly here where Christian psychology and conservative

biblical theology differ strongly from this integrative approach.

In his discussion on the role of Scripture, the author insists that “scripture must take a primary role in determining a Christian worldview” (p. 238). He continues that the Christian faith informs and critiques every aspect of life. Yet, while pointing to the works of Larry Crabb, Entwistle disagrees with the *prima scriptura* position. “*Prima scriptura* integrationists, however, insist that it is necessary to see Scripture as more authoritative than other epistemic sources. For instance Larry Crabb argued, ‘No psychology can claim to be Christian which directly or indirectly denies to the Scripture the role of final arbiter’” (p. 238).

In his Two-Book View of integration, Entwistle insists that general revelation found in nature and special revelation found in the Bible are equally meaningful and equal in authority as both are true and all truth comes from God. According to the author, Crabb committed an error in logic by failing to distinguish Scripture from theological interpretation. He states that theological interpretation is prone to errors in human reasoning and is, therefore, imperfect. The same is true for understanding the natural world. We know it imperfectly because we are imperfect. To strengthen his argument, he quotes Jim Guy.

The primary issue which must be resolved at the onset is to determine which source of data – the Bible or nature – has greater authority in the task of integration. This would seem to erroneously imply the existence of a hierarchical structure wherein some truth is ‘truer’ than other truth. This also suggests a fallacious dichotomy, wherein one source of revealed truth, the Bible, is in conflict with another source of revealed truth, nature, with the implication that one must somehow choose between the two. ... If all truth is God’s truth, then it would seem that the issue at hand is the accurate discernment of truth, not the hierarchical arrangement of sources of truth (p. 240).

While appearing to agree with Christian psychology, as understood by the Society for Christian Psychology, that Scripture has absolute authority because its author, God, is the ultimate authority on all things, spiritual and natural, Entwistle ultimately questions our ability to know God’s truth with absolute certainty. Like Entwistle, Christian psychology values the work of the scientific community and recognizes its contribution to our knowledge of parts of the created world. Where this view of integration and Christian psychology strongly disagree is over the matter of the primacy of Scripture. Johnson contends, “The term primacy has the advantage of implying the existence and relative legitimacy of other texts and authorities, while also communicating that Scripture has the preeminent role to play in our understanding” (2007, p. 188). For Christian psychology, the Bible is superior to all other forms of authority because the author, God, is infallible. It is the only work known to man that

is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). While science can enhance and inform our understanding of Scripture, it is not equal to Scripture in providing or arbitrating truth.

Overall, the second edition of *Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity: An Introduction to Worldview Issues, Philosophical Foundations, and Models of Integration* offers an intriguing examination of an approach to integration that is likely to be disputed among many in the Christian counseling field. While this view deviates from the better known works by integration authors such as Gary Collins and Larry Crabb, it articulates well the integrative position of those who argue for equality between science and Scripture. It is true that some views presented in this work differ strongly from Christian Psychology, particularly the issue of *prima scriptura*. Still, there are areas of agreement. Finally, more seasoned professionals may find Entwistle’s thought-provoking position on integration an interesting read; however, due to his position on Scripture, this text is not recommended for novice counselors or students, unless it is read critically in conjunction with other books in the field that present the authoritative view of Scripture.

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Elliott, Matthew. (2006). *Faithful feelings: Rethinking emotion in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel. 304 pp. \$21.99 (Reviewed by Lydia Kim-van Daalen, Urbana Theological Seminary. She can be reached at lydiakim.vd@gmail.com)

Can Christians rely on emotions in their spiritual life? This question is often asked and a positive answer often doubted among Christians. In this book, the author argues for an affirmative answer. Elliott makes a plea to read emotional language in the New Testament as it was meant to be read, evoking both passionate intellect and intellectual affections. Today however, due to a triumph of reason over against the perceived dangers of the passions, which has been the central theme of Western philosophy, theological concepts have often been robbed of their emotional meaning. Consequently, emotions in the New Testament have come to be understood wrongly. This kind of thinking has led many biblical scholars and Christians to view emotions in a negative light. In a great argument Elliott fights this tendency, claiming that an emotion is neither merely a rather emotionless inner state or action, often promulgated for positive emotions such as love and joy, nor a purely overwhelming, negative

passion that needs to be fought such as anger, fear, or worry. Instead, the Bible encourages a vibrant emotional life. God himself is revealed as a passionate being. His emotions are not just anthropomorphic descriptions; they are real. Jesus is portrayed as a man with intense feelings, as is Paul. Believers are encouraged to love fully, to be angry rightly, to worry about the right kind of things, and to hope expectantly. According to Elliott, Emotions ought to be central to the Christian life and faith.

Elliott's aim in this book is to explain understanding as to what an emotion is, and consequently to demonstrate how emotions were perceived by the New Testament writers and what role they should play in the believer's life. He does so by giving a rationale for a cognitive approach to emotions (ch. 1), assessing the possible influence of Greco-Roman, Hellenistic (ch. 2), and Jewish philosophies (ch. 3) on the New Testament writers, and providing an analysis of emotion in the New Testament through a closer look at seven emotions that are basic human feelings: love, joy, hope (ch. 4), jealousy, fear, sorrow, and anger (ch. 5). In the concluding chapter (ch. 6), Elliott provides a summary and stresses the importance of a proper view of emotions for Christian living. Emotions are important for Christian ethics, he says, because they reveal the correctness of what one accepts as true and, in light of this, they direct behavior. Furthermore, the presence or absence of emotions is a guide to the genuineness of what a person truly believes. Without proper emotions, there is, in fact, reason to call one's faith into question.

According to Elliott, emotions are "an indicator of what we believe and value. . . . [they are] cognitive judgments or construals that tell us about ourselves and our world" (p. 53-54). Christian emotions are the same as those of non-Christians. What sets the emotions of Christians apart is why they are felt and for what they are felt. Elliott asserts, furthermore, that emotions are generally morally neutral (with envy perhaps being one of the very few exceptions). They are a reflection of what people believe at the very core of their being, and as such it is the thinking about the object (which activates the emotion) and the intensity that causes the emotion to be morally right or wrong.

Following scholars like Lazarus and Solomon, Elliott holds a cognitivist view of emotions. This view makes thoughts, beliefs, and judgments central to understanding how emotions arise, which contrasts with the understanding of philosophers like Descartes, Kant, and Darwin, who believed emotions to be rather uncontrollable physiological reactions. At the foundation of Elliott's argument is the conviction that the New Testament is written and, therefore, needs to be read with this cognitive understanding of emotions. Only then does it make sense that people are held responsible for having or not having particular emotions in certain situations, and only then does it make sense that emotions are commanded and that harmful emotions can be transformed to healthy emotions.

This book makes a significant contribution to Christian theology and Christian living. Though certainly not the first to argue for the necessity of a holistic interplay between reason and emotion in the Christian faith (Augustine, Calvin, and Edwards are some other examples), Elliott provides unique theological arguments. Elliott relies on a variety of scholars from past and present times in areas such as theology, philosophy, psychology, and anthropology. Like Christian philosopher Roberts (2003; 2007), but less philosophical, and like Piper (1986), but with greater focus on emotions in the New Testament itself, Elliott's widely researched and interdisciplinary study demonstrates specifically what emotional language in the New Testament was meant to convey. The book is scholarly in nature and may be challenging to read at times due to technical language, such as Hebrew, Greek and lexicographical explanations (starting especially in Ch. 4) throughout the book. However, it is an essential read for pastors, counselors, biblical scholars, and interested Christians; it has the potential to transform and enrich the Christian faith of individuals as well as inform and correct standard interpretations of emotional language in the New Testament.

There are three points of critique, or, rather, points of caution, that need to be mentioned. First, Elliott argues that emotions are generally morally neutral. The cognitive content that guides the emotion determines their moral value. However, Scripture seems to imply that any and all emotions are either morally good or morally bad, and that there is no such thing as a morally neutral emotion. Emotions always have a moral quality attached to them. The reason is that emotions are interconnected with thinking and willing, and reveal concerns, values, and action tendencies. This interconnectedness makes emotions necessarily morally charged. Therefore, emotions are, to a greater or lesser extent, always holy or unholy, spiritual or sinful.

Second, relying too much on a cognitive framework of emotions in which people learn to have spiritual emotions by adjusting their beliefs, may cloud the reality that God through the Holy Spirit is the One who ultimately brings a change in the emotions. The role of faith in the power of God to create "a new supernatural sense, . . . a certain divine spiritual taste" (Edwards, 1746/1959, p. 259)" and prayer to that end should have equal place with a focus on proper beliefs in the life of a believer. Though Elliott would certainly agree and though he explicitly states that it has not been his aim to make "a comprehensive statement about the ability or inability of people to work to change their emotions or the role the Holy Spirit in the process of that change," (p. 267) more references to the importance of the regenerating and transforming work of the Spirit would provide a more balanced and theologically holistic framework.

Third, though Elliott acknowledges that there may be many methods to alter the emotions, he places a heavy stress on changing emotions through the modification of beliefs (an approach similar to the

interventions of Cognitive Therapy): good doctrine leads to feeling the right emotion (p. 262). There may be one or two references to the importance of fellowship to bring about emotional change, however, other non-cognitive methods are left unmentioned due to the strong emphasis on the necessity of changing emotions through altering beliefs. In light of psychological research that is beginning to recognize the importance of experiential interventions in the process of change (Greenberg & Paivio, 2003), mentioning some of these facts would improve this already excellent work.

Faithful Feelings encourages Christians to obtain intellectual (that is cognitively guided) emotions, so they can be used as faithful reflections of their beliefs and values. Consequently, believers can faithfully act out the feelings that God requires and desires. When emotions are understood and expressed in the way the New Testament writers meant them to be, the Christian faith of individuals and of the church as a whole will become vibrant, energetic, and contagious, reflecting the reality of a living and passionate God.

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Levy-Achtemeier, S.M. (2012). *Flourishing Life: Now and in the Time to Come*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books. 130 pp. \$17. (Reviewed by Samantha Griffiths, M.A. She can be reached at samanthagriffitts@gmail.com.)

“Well done, my good and faithful servant,” words the Christian faithful long to hear their Master speak after the last breath has left their mortal lungs. “Well done...” The phrase resounds with pleasure, victory, and the sense of a life well lived. Such thriving is the focus of *Flourishing Life: Now and in the Time to Come*. Drawing on the fields of evolutionary neuroscience, psychology and theology, author Sandra M. Levy-Achtemeier considers what it means to live life as a vibrant testimony to God’s presence in his children. Central to the author’s focus is the role of narrative in the construction of meaning, thus providing the reader with a framework upon which to construct an

interdisciplinary understanding of the human identity and its holistic fulfillment.

Sandra Levy-Achtemeier’s understanding of human flourishing is built on several significant presuppositions. Her belief in theistic evolution, in which an Intelligent Designer guides and directs evolutionary development (p. 14), sets the tone for the entire work’s marriage of science and spirituality. Simultaneously, the author’s acknowledgement of a moral law and the human tendency to search for God defies evolutionary explanations that are reductionist in nature (p. 11), instead providing theological justification for these “evolved” capacities. In addition to viewing humanity as the ultimate outcome of biological evolution, the author also sees each individual life in a perpetual state of evolution into a better, more spiritual person. Accordingly, the environment, not a disposition to sin, plays a central role in lives that fail to flourish (p. 11). Levy-Achtemeier’s embrace of evolutionary theism and the notion that humanity’s natural tendency is towards spiritual improvement rather than deterioration, is wed to her embrace of the “postevangelical society.” The term “postevangelical” describes “a theological movement away from rigid dogma and literal Scripture interpretation to a more dynamic openness to ongoing revelation within a pluralistic context.” (p. 46) Despite the book’s evolutionary and postevangelical groundwork, the author asserts that human beings are indeed created in God’s image, embodied and relational souls intended to flourish (p. 5).

There is more to life than the present. Every waking moment of the human life is enveloped in a richness of context, for every second is nestled within a past and a future. It is this view of life in the context of a grander personal narrative that provides a richness of flourishing. According to the author, viewing life from a narrative perspective is vital to an individual’s construction of the self, including but not limited to attributing meaning to those parts of life that are filled with pain and confusion. The construction of meaning through narrative is most effectively accomplished within a religious tradition, which “can provide the best chance for creating a sense of coherent flourishing in the end.” (p. 92)

Settled in the context of narrative is Sandra Levy-Achtemeier’s vision of what it means to truly live a flourishing life. It carries with it the notion of integrity and continuity (p. 4). A flourishing life is further characterized by a sense of coherence between the past and future self, as well as coherence between worldview and practice (p. 30). To flourish is to be filled with hope, joy, compassion, and acts of service that pour forth from a grateful heart. A flourishing life is one in which individuals have made the most out of they have; what they were born with and what they were given by those around them (p. 17). Finally, the flourishing life is one that demonstrates resilience in the face of trauma.

The evening primrose is a remarkable flower, its blooms majestic displays of delicate white petals. Yet

without darkness, the evening primrose would be an eternal bud on the cusp of flowering; a manifestation of unrealized magnificence. To observe the beautiful blooms of the evening primrose, one must wait for the fall of darkness. This peculiar bloom serves as an incredible metaphor for Sandra Levy-Achtemeier's final aspect of the flourishing life: resilience in the face of trauma. To demonstrate resilience in the face of suffering involves meaning-making (p. 32); it involves setting the event within the larger web of narrative, situating the trauma within a grander context of redemption, both individually and within the larger religious community. Human beings cannot experience hope without loss, nor joy without sorrow (p. 87). Ultimately, the author notes, the most complete and final flourishing will only be realized eschatologically, in bodily resurrection (p. 95). William Cowper beautifully articulated the concept of resilience in the face of trauma in his hymn, "God Works in Mysterious Ways".

*His purposes will ripen fast
Unfolding every hour
The bud may have a bitter taste
But sweet will be the flower.*

An individual's tendency to flourish can be strengthened by "embodied practices" such as ritual and storytelling within the context of meaning that a religious tradition provides (p. 78). Such embodied practices include music, dance, storytelling, and mindful meditation. Due to the brain's plasticity, these practices and the wider culture that influences them, have the potential to change the structure of the brain (p. 40). In other words, "what you do is what you become," and community shapes what you do (p. 115). According to the author, involvement in a religious community alone is beneficial for the brain, since it provides a sense of overall meaning in life (p. 77). In addition, the combination of ritual and sense of community demonstrate brain-soothing properties, and the combination of ritual practice and music has been found to release endorphins and increase the availability of serotonin (p. 45). Therefore, according to the author, it is possible to enhance one's level of holistic functioning by means of membership in a religious culture, such as Christianity, that provides an individual with an overall sense of purpose. In turn, this overarching purpose provides the individual with the foundation upon which to construct a life narrative, thereby resulting in the increased likelihood of a meaningful and flourishing life.

"Flourishing is always possible" (p. 16), but nevertheless many do not flourish. Some are bitter, some utterly convinced of the meaninglessness of life. Some cling to past roles (p. 4) reminiscent of F. Scott Fitzgerald's character Jay Gatsby, who yearned for a future entirely made up of the past. Some life stories demonstrate a great deal of coherence, yet fail to flourish because they cling tirelessly to an evil cause. The young men who carried out the attacks on the

Boston Marathon, for example, seemed to demonstrate both horizontal and vertical coherence, yet they left behind them a path of death and destruction. The reality is that people of all ages in all parts of the world are casualties of circumstance; some have acted, some have been acted upon, and still others are victims of their own genes and biochemical compositions.

In a world such as this, those engaged in caring for souls are in positions of great influence. Sandra Levy-Achtemeier's book reminds counselors that the counseling process is really about entering into the story of another human being. "We invite people to share their stories, to listen to someone else's, and to allow the story of God to provide a better understanding of both." (p. 50) It is about allowing God's redemption to shape weaknesses into strengths and defeats into victories. It is about facilitating an individual's enhanced understanding of the way God works in the lives of his creation. Counselors are facilitators of human flourishing, and in this process God is glorified.

Furthermore, *Flourishing Life: Now and in the Time to Come* serves to remind those in the counseling profession to consider the brain-dependent nature of the soul in this life. This reminder is especially relevant for those in the nouthetic counseling movement whose tendency is to dismiss brain-based explanations for psychopathology. Counselors must take great care not to trample on broken reeds in the name of being faithful to Scripture. Scientific understanding and faithfulness to Scripture are not mutually exclusive. The author quotes Teilhard de Chardin, "To your deep inspiration which commands me to be, I shall respond by taking great care never to stifle nor distort nor waste my power to love and to do." (p. 58) God would have us be compassionate.

At the same time, great care must be given to maintain a spirit of compassion without condoning or facilitating sin. Although useful and informative in many ways, Sandra Levy-Achtemeier strays from the biblical notion of sin and the human need for a Savior, instead favoring a pluralistic approach to the human condition and other monotheistic religions. Rather than speaking of narrative in the form of creation, fall, redemption and consummation, she skips the "fall" portion, instead leading readers to believe that they can experience redemption with or without Christ. For example, the author speaks of "embracing the grace of God" for the sake of human flourishing, yet does not mention the gospel. This is consistent with her notion of an ideal religious community; one that embraces orthodoxy yet refrains from claims to "absolute knowledge" (p. 116). Her world is a world in which strength is found in the depths of oneself (p. 68); where individuals write their own stories and shape their own souls (p. 35). However, a theology that is faithful to Scripture would have us believe that God is humanity's sole source of strength, and that God alone is the author of human destiny.

Nevertheless, Sandra Levy-Achtemeier's book should not be dismissed. Her attempt to marry

science and theology in a meaningful work on human flourishing is praiseworthy. She rightly acknowledges the limitations of science, although many would disagree with her on what those exact limitations are. The author states, "Science was never intended to answer, nor can it answer, questions of why the universe exists at all, or questions about the deepest meaning of human life." (15) Also admirable is the horizontal coherence she has demonstrated in her own quest for flourishing, by enduring a major career change and subsequent readjustment in the ministry. Finally, the author's commitment to embracing brokenness within

the community of faith is an inspirational testament to the love of God and his power made perfect in weakness.

God is the Great Author. By grace, he equips fragile human beings to participate in his grand narrative by entering into the stories of others. Sandra M. Levy-Achtemeier's *Flourishing Life: Now and in the Time to Come*, is worth perusing. For if read thoughtfully and evaluated on the basis of Scripture, it can provide counselors with a much-needed reminder that no one is an island, and that every present moment has both a past and a future.

2013 Baylor Symposium on Faith and Culture
Kierkegaard: A Christian Thinker for Our Time?
Wednesday, October 30-Saturday, November 2, 2013

The year 2013 will mark the 200th anniversary of Søren Kierkegaard's birth. This seminal figure in Western thought wrote some definitive essays in Christian psychology and called himself a Christian psychologist, before Freud was born. He is therefore considered the father of Christian psychology. The Society for Christian Psychology will be joining Baylor University to celebrate this event and will have their own set of papers where Kierkegaard's contributions to psychology will be explored.

Keynote Speakers:

Simon Podmore

He is currently a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Theology, Philosophy, and Religious Studies at Liverpool Hope University. Next year he will be Lecturer in Systematic Theology there. He received an M.A. in Theological Studies from the University of St. Andrews, and a PhD from King's College, University of London. In *Kierkegaard and the Self Before God: Anatomy of the Abyss* (Indiana University Press, 2011) he explores the difficult relationship between consciousness of self and consciousness of God with reference to the problem of the "infinite qualitative difference" between the human and the divine. He is drawn to the darker, and hence often under-examined, aspects of theology and their relationships with issues in philosophy, spirituality, and mental health. He is currently working on *Struggling with God: Kierkegaard, Temptation, & Spiritual Trial*. Dr. Podmore is also the Secretary of the Søren Kierkegaard Society of the United Kingdom, and the co-founder of the Mystical Theological Network.

Mark Tietjen

Mark A. Tietjen is associate professor of philosophy and religion at the University of West Georgia and secretary-treasurer of the Søren Kierkegaard Society. He holds an M.Div and Th.M from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in philosophy from Baylor University. He is the author of *Kierkegaard, Communication, and Virtue: Authorship as Edification* (Indiana University Press, due out in spring, 2013). His articles have appeared in such journals and books as *Faith and Philosophy*, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, the *International Kierkegaard Commentary* series, and *Southwest Philosophical Review*. His specialization is Søren Kierkegaard and, in particular, his relation to the classical virtue tradition. He has also begun interdisciplinary work on the concept of authority and the virtues that accompany authority relationships. He has been a summer fellow at the Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College and participated in the Templeton-sponsored Science for Ministry initiative at Princeton Seminary.