Foundation Theology
2014
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2014

Faculty & Student Essays
for Ministry Professionals

30th Anniversary Edition

Edited by
John Moses

Graduate Theological Foundation
Foundation Theology 2014: Faculty & Student Essays for Ministry Professionals
30th Anniversary Edition

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Editor’s Note

It is one of the great strengths of GTF that it draws its students from many traditions of faith. There are commitments and preoccupations which properly belong to our individual communities, but there is in my experience a growing awareness of the priority of the religious dimension to which our many traditions bear their distinctive witness.

It remains the case, however, that the prevailing climate of opinion is profoundly sceptical – and at times indifferent – to the claims of faith. This situation is to be found in its most extreme form throughout much of Western Europe, but we deceive ourselves if we do not recognise the degree to which the adherents of all the world’s great religions are made to feel in so many situations that they are working against the grain.

It is a commonplace to suggest that predictable responses are no longer sufficient. The accumulated problems of globalization, population explosion, urbanization, migration, environmental hazards poverty and international terrorism speak of a changing world order in which traditional words, traditional approaches, all too often lack a cutting edge. These things provide a global backcloth, but – nearer home – it is impossible not to take serious account of the moral vacuum in which lives are led, judgements formed and decisions taken. Those who are caught up day by day in the work of ministry – while they might properly rejoice in the good things that can be found wherever we look – know all too well the situations of despair where men, women and children find themselves increasingly alienated both from their true selves and from the world.
Is there a word of hope, however, which is common to our several faith communities which enables theologians and pastors and evangelists to hold the faith in uncertain times and to do so with a quiet confidence in the God who transcends all our traditions? I believe there is, and I suggest that it might be found in what all traditions of faith – and not just the Abrahamic faiths – recognise as the desert tradition. The desert, of course, is not merely a place. It is a type of religious experience. The emptiness and the silence of the desert speak of the isolation and the desolation to which some are condemned at particular times. It tells of the struggle to survive. It brings its own predicaments and temptations. It involves a confrontation with the ‘devils’ within.

I have been drawn back in recent years to consider again the importance of the desert tradition through my reading of Thomas Merton*, for whom the story and the wisdom of the desert provided the connecting thread that drew together his vocations as Trappist monk, writer, contemplative, social critic and ecumenist. It may well be that the physical desert has become a symbol of God-forsakenness, of emptiness, of abandonment; but the desert is both a place of testing and a place of truth. It speaks above everything else of the priority of God.

There are other writers who, drawing upon a range of experiences, speak of the importance of these things. T.S. Eliot, writing in the aftermath of the First World War, captured in The Waste Land the sense of futility felt by a whole generation that had known ‘the agony in stony places’. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, drawing upon his bitter experiences of the labour camps of Soviet Russia, discerned a place ‘beyond despair’, where those who endure the desolation of the spirit discover that God might yet be found. R.S. Thomas, the Welsh priest-poet, explored constantly throughout his

* John Moses’ book on Thomas Merton, written to mark the centenary of his birth, was published by Bloomsbury, together with a Foreword by Rowan Williams, in the summer of 2014 under the title DIVINE DISCONTENT: The Prophetic Voice of Thomas Merton.
poetry in his honest, sombre way the perennial experience of the presence and the absence of God, of the apparent emptiness of prayer.

The desert takes many forms and those who work in the barren deserts of contemporary life will be familiar with all that it means in practice for people today; and yet the word hope remains the appropriate word in the desert experience because it speaks of the hidden life, of endurance, of testing, of self-abandonment, of the silent prayer of the spirit. Faith communities that understand the tradition of the desert will know what it means to hold the faith in obscurity and in silence, living with our brokenness and our incompleteness, watching and waiting.

There is, of course, a word of caution that must be given. Articles that speak of the priority of God can so easily be vacuous; but the desert tradition is too rigorous, too searching, for that to be allowed. What the desert might mean in practice will vary from person to person and from place to place; but some possibilities suggest themselves immediately.

First, the desert – whatever form it might take – is a place where everything that is peripheral or superficial falls away. It follows that there must therefore be a renewed awareness of the present moment. There is a temptation for faith communities to be preoccupied with either the past or the future; and the activist tradition, which has been so dominant in the western world, does not necessarily provide the space in which the living God can be heard. The man or woman of faith will find that it is only those who can stop and be still, embracing the present moment with all its possibilities, who can discern life’s deepest rhythms, making the necessary connections between past, present and future, and discovering the perspective – honest, at times sobering, but also compassionate – which properly belongs to any authentic faith. The present moment is both a time of judgement and a time of promise.

Secondly, the man or woman who encounters the desert learns very quickly that the conventional platitudes with which we console ourselves do not often survive the test. The desert experience requires
us to acknowledge the limitations of all definitions of faith. Authentic faith – like the authentic freedom we require for our own personal development – requires an openness of mind, which engages freely with life as it presents itself. Over-confident affirmations of faith can be seriously deceptive. Nor is it any longer sufficient to give answers to the questions we think men and women ought to be asking. Life is not so simple. What the desert requires is a new awareness, a new empathy, a new recognition of how much we still have to learn from others. Scripture, tradition and reason – together with our received patterns of prayer – continue to be important boundary markers, but the God whom we seek goes before us and invites us to follow.

Thirdly, the desert leaves us in no doubt about our dependence upon others: for the necessities of life, for companionship, and for the affirmation of a common calling. Why else has the giving of the humblest hospitality to other desert travellers been so important? The desert is then able to open hearts so that we begin to look beyond ourselves and see humankind as one family, one world. It is one of the least attractive features of the contemporary scene that nation states, ethnic groups, and even communities of faith define themselves far too frequently by their separation from one another with the distortions, the caricatures and the scapegoating that inevitably follow. Men and women of faith – regardless of their particular community of faith – are supremely well placed, if only they can draw upon the desert tradition, to speak of the need for a broader vision, a deeper compassion, even perhaps for us today of the need for a global awareness, a global vision, a global ethic.

I have no doubt that *Foundation Theology 2014* will provide its readers with insights which inform and challenge their understanding of ministry. The confidence that students of GTF will rightly have in the integrity of their own traditions of faith does not exclude a wider recognition of the priority of the religious dimension to which we bear witness in our different ways. I hope that the challenges posed by the world in which we live as we engage in the work of ministry might encourage men and women in all communities of faith to
rediscover in the desert tradition a primary resource for discipleship: holding the faith – as it must be held at times – in obscurity and silence, living with our brokenness and incompleteness, watching and waiting.

The Very Reverend Dr. John Moses, KCVO
Editor

Dean Emeritus,
St. Paul’s Cathedral, London
John Macquarrie Professor of Anglican Theology,
Graduate Theological Foundation

Summer 2014
Special Note on the 30th Anniversary of *Foundation Theology*

“Celebrating Thirty Years of Faculty and Student Scholarship”

The commitment of the Graduate Theological Foundation to its State Charter as an educational research institution has always been the distinguishing characteristic of its work and mission in the field of ministry education. From its earliest days as a degree-granting foundation, this institution has demonstrated a commitment to both research and applied scholarship and academic endeavors reflected not only in the quality of its faculty and curriculum, but also, and with special attention to, publications reflecting that commitment. The GTF felt it was not sufficient for this institution to offer high-level training with internationally distinguished faculty for professionals working in the broad field of ministry as parish pastors, institutional chaplains, musicians and liturgists, mediators, counselors, administrators, and educators.

A significant component of our charter’s mandate is for published scholarship. So, since 1984, the GTF has annually published a collection of essays written both by faculty and by our graduate students. The results have been rewarding in that our series monographs are held in some of the most outstanding theological libraries throughout the English-speaking world. And, in addition to our faculty continuing to contribute to their research fields, (a responsibility of every serious scholar), our graduate students have found themselves published, often for the first time, in an internationally distributed theological monograph series which has gained them much valuable attention as future teachers and scholars themselves.
In recognition of our 30 years of publishing research and applied scholarship in the broad field of professional ministry, the GTF in 2014 commences the publishing of the *Foundation Theology* monograph series in a combined volume of both faculty and graduate student essays. Whereas in the past few years the monograph was designated for faculty only in even-numbered years and graduate students in odd-numbered years, the GTF has determined that it will serve the GTF’s historic commitment to published scholarship by combining outstanding essays written by both faculty and graduate students in the same monograph each year. The advantage to both faculty and students is that they can contribute to this scholarly endeavor annually rather than only every other year. Furthermore, we significantly increase the exposure of both our faculty who are writing in their specialized fields of study as well as our graduate students who are completing their doctoral studies in anticipation of furthering their professional careers which, needless to say, may be greatly enhanced through publishing in this national forum.

During the past 30 years some outstanding scholars on the GTF faculty have made major contributions to the published scholarship in their specialized fields of study, and not a few graduate students have found that advancement within the academic community has been significantly aided by their having published an article of merit in this monograph series. It is our hope and our intention that such benefits will be further enhanced by making this publishing outlet an annual opportunity for both our faculty and our graduate students.

Dr. John H. Morgan  
Karl Mannheim Professor  
of the History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences,  
Graduate Theological Foundation

Summer 2014
I Have Dreamed a Dream…

Howard Avruhm Addison

Sovereign of the Universe, I am Yours as are my dreams. I have dreamed a dream and know not what it is. Whether I have dreamed of myself, my companions have dreamed of me or I have dreamed of others, if they be good dreams, confirm and reinforce them like the dreams of Joseph; if they require remedy, heal them, as the waters of Marah were healed by our teacher, Moses, as Miriam was healed of her leprosy, Naaman of his leprosy, Hezekiah of his sickness, and the waters of Jericho by Elisha. As You turned the curse of the wicked Balaam into a blessing, so turn all my dreams into something good for me (1).

Truth be told, I was twenty-one before I ever witnessed the Kohanim ascend the bimah to ritually bless the congregation. Raised in a community where those of priestly descent didn’t dukhen (2), I recall being totally intrigued. However, I also remember looking at the prayer book, which instructed us to twice murmur the above-cited prayer, and wondering: how is this meant to work? Was the experience of standing completely enfolded in talitot or otherwise shielding our eyes as the or ha-sh’khinah, the Light of the divine Presence, purportedly streamed through the outstretched priests’ fingers meant to induce a dream-like state? But even if that were so, then what was this ceremony’s connection to my personal dreams?
How was it possibly going to advance the good ones and transform the bad? And, most basic of all, whatever does the “healing of dreams” mean anyway?

More than four decades have passed since my initial encounter with this curious prayer. As I’ve grown more interested in dreams, I find myself being drawn back to its words, customs and the interpretations that surround it. Yet, I can’t help but wonder what wisdom and healing power might still inhere in this ancient entreaty? On an even broader level, what relevance might our tradition’s views of dreams and dreaming hold for us who live in this modern, psycho-scientific age? And what does any of this have to do with Birkat Kohanim?

**Judaism and Dreams: On Being of Two Minds**

Arguably, the word that best summarizes Judaism’s orientation towards dreams was chosen by Monford Harris as the title for the penultimate chapter of his *Studies in Jewish Dream Interpretation: Ambivalence* (3). Depending on the count, dreams are mentioned as many as thirty three times in the Hebrew Bible, with nine such instances occurring in Genesis alone. However, the various texts of Scripture are hardly unequivocal in their judgment of dreams or their value. The prophet Joel, speaking in God’s name, declared: And it will come about after this that I will pour out My spirit on all humankind and your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions (4). Conversely, Ecclesiastes warns: “For through the multitude of dreams and vanities [the author’s regular term for “impermanence”], there are many words; but one should revere (only) God” (5). Deuteronomy seems divided against itself over the reliability of dreamers and visions, dithering over how to determine if their communications are of God or derived from presumption or malevolent forces to the extent of wondering whether even the fulfillment of their messages is a mark of validity (6).
The classical texts of Rabbinic Judaism also speak with a split voice. The second century Judean sage, Rabbi Meir found dreams inconsequential, stating that “dreams neither help nor harm,”(7) while the third century Babylonian teacher, Rav Judah, said, in the name of (his teacher) Rav: There are three things for which one should pray: good rulers, good years, and good dreams... as it is written; You make me dream and thereby cause me to live (8). The Talmud’s compendium on dream interpretation (found in Tractate B’rkhot on pages 55-57 and oft cited in this essay) first indicates that a pertinent interpretation need be specific to the dreamer and his or her dream, then offers what seems to be an authoritative list of dream images and their meanings!

Post-talmudic Judaism’s valuation of dreams waxes and wanes. Classical mystic texts, including the twelfth-century German Sefer Ḥasidim (“The Book of the Pious”) and the Sefer Ha-zohar (“The Book of Splendor”), which first appeared in thirteenth-century Spain, contain ample references to dreams. During that same era in France, Rabbi Jacob of Marvège, employed dream questions to decide some matters of Jewish law, as recounted in his book, She’eilot U-t’shuvot Min Ha-shamayim (“Inquiries and Responsa from Heaven”) (9). In sixteenth-century Italy, Rabbi Solomon Almoli composed a dream manual entitled Pitron Ha-ḥalomot, literally The Interpretation of Dreams. However, many authorities then and later most likely shared Maimonides’ perspective that dreams are solely products of the imagination (10).

Our modern period reflects a similar dichotomy. The literature of Hasidism, beginning with the lessons taught by its founding teacher, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), is replete with tales of visions and dreams. Monford Harris describes both Iraqi and American Yiddish dream texts written in the early twentieth century (11). Students of the late North African kabbalist, Madame Colette Aboulker-Muscat (1909-2003), including Catherine Shainberg of New York, continue to teach and/or practice versions of Jewish dream interpretation that they learned from her in Jerusalem (12). However,
most contemporary rabbis and the vast majority of Jewry, save some in the Hasidic and Sephardic communities, reflect a modern scientific bias that prefers Western therapeutic modes to traditional forms of counsel they deem “old worldly,” unreliable, and outmoded. In disproportionate numbers today’s Jews will discuss their dreams with psychotherapists, while the possibility of addressing them in Jewish contexts largely has been foreclosed.

**When We Sleep: The Process of Dreaming**

Over the last century plus, great advances have been made in our understanding of dreams. Sigmund Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900, marked a breakthrough in the study of how the unconscious manifests itself through our dreams. Freud’s theory of dreams as wish fulfillment (13), Carl Jung’s insight into the compensatory and complementary roles dreams play in the integrative growth of the self (14) and Fritz Perls’ observation that each character in a dream represents projected aspects of the dreamer (15) all have furthered our understanding of dream work. Advances in neuroscience have even made it possible to locate which parts of the brain go “off line” and which continue to function when we sleep, which help explain the associative, nonlinear, symbolic, and even surreal quality of our dreams (16).

If we are to understand the primary intent underlying the “Sovereign of the Universe” prayer and its connection to Birkat Kohanim, we will need a sense of the cultural setting from which it arose, a setting far different from our own. In the introductory lines of *Dreamers, Scribes and Priests*, Frances Flannery-Dailey reminds us:

> Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern peoples regarded dreams quite differently than do those of us in Post-Freudian, modern society. Whereas we tend to view dreams as unreal, interior phenomena, ancient peoples believed that some dreams were
genuine visits from the deity or their divine representatives...modern dreamers tend to hold that the value of dreams lies in their ability to yield information about the dreamers’ past or present psychology, ancient peoples believed that dreams impart knowledge of the future or knowledge of events apart from the interior life of the dreamer (17).

Today most of us use the words “I had a dream” to connote the inner physical and psychological processes that occur while we are asleep. The ancients, who viewed dreams as visitations from other dimensions, would “see,” be “met,” or be “visited” by their dreams (18). “Pleasant” or “evil” dreams were understood to reflect the dreamer’s psychological status. “Message Dreams,” which directly conveyed God’s word, like Jacob’s “Ladder Dream,” (19) and “Symbolic Dreams,” akin to Joseph’s dreams and those he interpreted for Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker (and later for Pharaoh himself) were of far greater import (20). These had ramifications for the health and fortunes of both individuals and nations.

The understanding of dreams put forward in the literature of rabbinic Judaism is based in part on the belief that the spirit of prophecy had departed from Israel during the early Second Temple period (21). While some Sages claimed that what one sees in dreams is only suggested by the dreamer’s own thoughts (22), others maintained that even during this era, when we lack bona fide prophets to clearly speak God’s word, God still communicates with us through dreams (23). As the Talmud master Rabbah said, “Though the blessed Holy One declared, ‘I will surely hide my face on that day,’ (Deuteronomy 31:19), God also said, ‘I shall speak with him in a dream’ (Numbers 12:6)” (24). Sleep may be considered an incomplete or sixtieth part of death, but dreams are a sixtieth part of prophecy (25).
Perhaps the most quoted Talmudic dictum about dreams is attributed to the Babylonian sage, Rav Ḥisda (d. 320 C.E.), “A dream left uninterpreted is like a letter left unread” (26). This statement implies that, like their predecessors in the ancient Near East, there were many sages who considered dreams to be visitations from another dimension. They relate tales of individuals visited by departed biblical figures, who may symbolize a certain value or even impart a message (27). Twice the Talmud refers to a dispenser of supernatural information called the “master of the dream,” in Hebrew ba·al ha-ḥalom (28), a variant of the title “master of dreams,” which Joseph’s brothers pejoratively applied to him (29). Harris ascribes little importance to this figure (30) who is rarely mentioned in Jewish lore and whose messages the Talmud twice tells the dreamer to ignore even though the ba·al ha-ḥalom appeared in his dream. It is interesting to note that in another rabbinic text the instructions of the ba·al ha-ḥalom led to the freeing of a female Jewish captive by her Greek captor (31) and that the Zohar later identifies the Archangel Gabriel as the ba·al ha-ḥalom (32).

While the sixteenth century dream interpreter, Solomon Almoli, basically maintained the sages’ view that dreams are visitations from heaven (33), the Zohar sets forth a complementary understanding according to which the soul actually leaves the body during the dreaming process and ascends to heaven, where it learns of future events and receives warnings of various sorts.

For when a one sleeps, the soul leaves and soars aloft. God then reveals to the soul … future events or things which correspond to a one's own thoughts, so as to serve as a warning. For no revelation comes when the body is in full vigor (awake and moving) (34), but an angel communicates things to the soul, and the soul transmits them; dreams, then, originate on high when souls leave the bodies, each one taking its own route (35).
This view is reflected in the traditional prayer recited upon waking, Modeh Ani, which thanks God for faithfully and compassionately restoring our souls to us each morning of our lives (36). Examples of both motifs, dreams as visitations and dreams as the ascent of the soul, can be found throughout kabbalistic and hasidic lore (37).

**To Heal Troubling Dreams**

Because most ancients and medievals believed that dreams originated in other-worldly dimensions, the need to find a proper response to disturbing night visions took on special importance. Texts from as far back as ancient Assyria and Babylonia describe various petitions offered and rites employed to ameliorate the potential impact of “Evil” Dreams. Examples of such prayers include: Make pleasant my dream (when I am on my) nocturnal couch. Or May the dream I shall see (this night)be good. May the dream I shall see be reliable, transform (O gods) the dreams I shall see into pleasant ones. Some devotees even turned to burying figurines under their bedroom floors inscribed with phrases like, “Get out, O evil (caused) by dreams; come in, O pleasantness (caused) by dreams”(38).

It is against this backdrop that we can better understand the dream amelioration rituals that are later found in the Talmud. While many sages believed that dreams are a sixtieth part of prophecy, they were concerned about the portents and the sources of dreams. Does a disturbing image foretell harm? Is it a warning or a call to repentance? Or, is it a veiled symbol of good tidings? (39) Can one even rely on the veracity of a dream message or has it been sent by demonic forces to mislead the dreamer? (40) To avoid any potentially negative consequences, the Talmud prescribes three alternative amelioration rituals, all subsumed under the Hebrew title, Hatavat ha-Halom, literally to “make better” or “enhance” (the implications of) our dreams.
Through a “dream fast,” one who experienced a troubling dream could do penance in hope of averting any portended harm. Considered as effective against bad dreams as is “fire, which consumes fibers,” some authorities even permitted the dreamer an otherwise forbidden fast on Shabbat, provided the dream had occurred the night before (41). A primary goal of this fast, as well as the other ceremonies described below, is to move the dreamer to repent, so that God will mercifully forgive and “sweeten” the outcomes of the troubling dream.

A second rite entails gathering three friends (42) together immediately after the morning service on the day following a troubling dream (43). All four participants recognize but never openly speak of the convener’s disturbing dream. Instead the dreamer begins by stating seven times that his (or possibly her) dream was good, which the friends affirm seven times (44). Antiphonally they recite a total of three sets of three Biblical verses, the first containing derivations of the word “to reverse or transform” (that is, words based on the trilateral Hebrew root, hei-pei-kaf) (45), the second set based on sentences including variations of the verb “to redeem” (that is, words based on the Hebrew root pei-dalet-hei) (46) and the third all containing the word for wellbeing and peace, shalom (47). The ceremony concludes with the dreamer reciting one by one the opening passages of Psalms 121, followed by Numbers 6:22-26, Psalms 16:11, and Ecclesiastes 9:7; the friends intoning the rest of each selection respectively, and then, as the dreamer makes a charitable contribution, the friends recite the familiar words of the Musaf Amidah as recited on the High Holy Days, “Repentance, Prayer, and Charity avert the harshness of the decree. Peace be to you, us and to all Israel. Amen.”

As might be evident from the two rituals described above, the dreamer never asks to have his (or her) dreams stop or even to have them interpreted. Instead these rites are intended to “sweeten” or transform the dreams. The healing power of this dynamic will become
clearer still, however, as we now explore of the entreaty “Sovereign of the Universe, I have dreamed a dream” (48).

“Sovereign of the Universe”

The Priestly Blessing, as prescribed in Numbers 6:24-6, was originally offered daily following the morning sacrifices in the Holy Temple. Now incorporated into the prayer service, it is still recited each morning in Jerusalem; other communities throughout Israel recite it only on Shabbat and festival days. Outside the land of Israel, the most prevalent custom is for the kohanim only to invoke the threefold blessing during the repetition of the Musaf Amidah on the first and last days of Passover and the first days of Sukkot, as well as on Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret and during the Morning Amidah on Simḥat Torah.

When Birkat Kohanim was recited regularly, all the dismayed dreamer had to do was attend worship the next morning and recite “Sovereign of the Universe” as the kohanim blessed the community. However, as the opportunities to hear Birkat Kohanim decreased, several procedural questions arose. Should the dreamer only recite “Sovereign of the Universe …” if s/he had a disturbing dream the night before the holy day or can it cover all disturbing dreams one had since the previous festival? If one recited it the first day of a festival and had no troubling dream the following night, should it be recited again on the second day or would that violate the proscription against taking God’s name in vain? In those locales where Birkat Kohanim is recited on Shabbat is everyone allowed to say “Sovereign of the Universe,” or is it, like the “dream fast,” permitted only to those who had disturbing dreams the night before? When should the recitation of the “Sovereign of the Universe” prayer begin and end? And, what happens if it seems the worshipper is unable to complete the entire prayer before the kohanim finish their blessing? (49)

The practice today in congregations which recite “Sovereign of the Universe” is for everyone present to say it on each festival day.
The first day’s recitation covers all disturbing dreams since the last festival. Since the prayer asks God to heal dreams others have had about you, it also can be recited on the second day; after all, who knows who might have dreamed of you even if you had no disturbing dream the previous night? In Israel, where Birkat Kohanim is recited on Shabbat, the custom is for “Sovereign of the Universe” to be recited solely by those troubled by their Friday night dreams, similar to the restriction cited above covering a “dream fast” a moot point for those of us outside Israel.

To assist in deciphering the meaning of the prayer, it might be useful to understand exactly how this dramatic rite proceeds in situ: The cantor and the kohanim antiphonally recite the first two words of the blessing, y’varekh’kha adonai (“May the Eternal bless you”). The kohanim then chant a melody as the congregants recite “Sovereign of the Universe” and conclude with the third word, v’yishm’rekha (“and guard you”). The community responds, Amen.

The cantor and kohanim then antiphonally recite the next four words of blessing, ya·eir adonai panav eilekha (“May the Eternal’s face shine upon you”). The kohanim again chant a melody while the congregants repeat “Sovereign of the Universe” and conclude with the fifth word, vi-ḥunneka (“and be gracious unto you”). The community again responds with an amen.

The cantor and kohanim antiphonally recite the last seven words of blessing, yissa adonai panav eilekha va-yasem l’kha shalom (“May the Eternal’s face be turned toward you [connoting divine favor] and grant you peace”) and the community responds with a final, Amen

While the kohanim privately recite their own concluding prayer, the congregation offers a different entreaty: “You who are majestic on high and who abides in might. You are peace and Your name is peace. May it be Your will to bestow peace on us” (50).

Underlying both the recitation of the “Sovereign of the Universe” prayer and the aforementioned “gathering of three friends” ceremony is the Talmudic principle according to which “all dreams follow the mouth [i.e., their stated interpretation] (51). Tractate B’rakhot even
recounts the misadventures of an unscrupulous dream interpreter, one Bar Hedya, whose pronouncements would determine whether identical dreams would be fulfilled for good or ill based on whether or not the dreamers paid him his fee (52). On a practical level, the notion that dreams “mean” whatever their interpreters claim might indicate that the dreamer is more likely to focus on those aspects of the dream highlighted by the interpreter while remaining insensitive to other elements in the dream. However, I believe this notion is rooted more firmly in Judaism’s beliefs about the power of words. Genesis 1 depicts a God who speaks the world into existence. A great deal of Jewish superstitious practice is based on name magic and the recombination of various words’ Hebrew letters, including equating their numeric value with those of other phrases, all of which are subsumed under the general rubric of *gematriyya*. A popular incantation used even today by conjurers, “Abracadabra,” is actually an anglicized version of an old Aramaic phrase meaning, “I shall create through speaking” (53).

Neither when reciting “Sovereign of the Universe,” nor through the ritual of “gathering three friends” is the dreamer looking for verbal interpretations. Even to admit out loud that one’s dream images were “evil” might trigger harmful consequences, as indicated by the talmudic warning not to “open your mouth to Satan,” intended to warn against inadvertently allowing one’s words to serve as portals for demonic forces (54). Through the recitation of the Birkat Kohanim and its attendant prayer or by the dreamer and the three friends repeatedly affirming that the dream was good, and through the calls during both rituals for transformation, release, fortification, healing, and peace, the dreamer finds assurance that the troubling images of his or her dream might ultimately bode well.

Through its fifteen Hebrew words Birkat Kohanim invoke God’s blessing, protection, illumination, grace, favor and peace. When recited by the kohanim, God’s presence is understood to be directly manifest amid the sanctuary and its gathered congregation. It is particularly within this flow of blessing and the immediacy of the
divine evoked by Birkat Kohanim that the potentially harmful portends of our dreams can best and most thoroughly be transformed for good.

One analogy used to describe this ceremony’s widely perceived, intense power to heal dreams was offered by the seventeenth century Galician commentator, Rabbi Avraham Hayim Schor (55). It derives from a principle associated with the Torah’s dietary laws, known to cognoscenti as the bateil b’shishim rule. The words bateil b’shishim mean literally “it is annulled through sixty [parts]” and can best be explained by example: if milk, say, were inadvertently to drip into a vat of meat soup, the soup would be rendered non-kosher unless the soup’s original volume was at least sixty times greater than the spilled milk. If it was, then the milk is deemed nullified and the soup is considered kosher. When the kohanim bless the people, the divine radiant presence, itself acknowledged in our texts as the source of prophecy, is believed to flood the sanctuary (56). Its infinite volume is more than sufficient to annul a bad dream, imagined literally to constitute a sixtieth part of prophecy (57), even if that dream emanated from demonic forces. It has even been noted if one adds up the number of letters which constitute the fifteen Hebrew words of Birkat Kohanim, the total is sixty! (58)

Given its long history, the reciting of “Sovereign of the Universe” during Birkat Kohanim must have proved reassuring and cleansing for our forebears. However, the question remains whether its recitation or participation in any of our traditional dream amelioration rites might so impact us today.

Dreams and Their Meanings: Then and Now

Flannery-Dailey was definitely correct; our contemporary understanding of dreams is far different from the pre-moderns’ (59). However, the more I study the classical Jewish texts which address dreams, the more foreshadowing I see of principles we moderns often claim to have discovered during the twentieth and twenty-first
centuries. To be sure, the observations scattered throughout tradition are often formulated in mythopoeic language and clearly were not derived through scientific study. Indeed, save in the work of Almoli and a few others, they were not presented in any systematic fashion at all. Contrary to talmudic claims that all dreams contain an admixture of nonsense, we are now coming to understand that potentially every aspect of a dream can be meaningful (60). It certainly would be unwarranted to claim that all elements of Freud or Jung’s theories of dreams can be found in rabbinic or kabbalistic literature; however, there is certainly wisdom in those sources that we should not discount, as some presage by centuries the findings of modern psychology and even neurology (61).

Carl Jung claimed that imagery and symbol are in and of themselves the language of dreams, a fact now borne out by the current findings of neurobiology (62). In the twelfth century the aforementioned Sefer Hasidim already observed that “the symbolic imagery of dreams may be compared to sign language. When travelling in a foreign country, one will meet people whose language one does not understand. They will communicate through sign language much like we communicate with the deaf. Yet the wise can discern what is being shown in the dream, why it is shown through symbols, and for what the symbols stand” (63).

Centuries ago, Rabbi Ze’ira claimed: “One who goes seven days without a dream is called ra (“unfortunate” or “bad”) since Scripture says, “One shall abide satisfied and shall not be visited by misfortune (ra)” (Proverbs 19:23)—Read not savei-a [satisfied] but sheva [seven]. What it means is this: one sees [all sorts of things in a dream], but does not remember what has been seen” (64).

We now know that all human beings (as well as other living creatures) dream during REM sleep, as well during other times in the sleep cycle, even if those dreams are not remembered upon waking (65). Rabbi Ze’ira might well be right that one who cannot recall even one dream per week is “unfortunate” because this lack represents a serious disconnect from one’s unconscious, thus from a vital source
of new insight and a path towards personal integration. That person might also be deemed “bad” because disconnection from one’s dreams insulates one from their warnings. Thus we are more susceptible to acting out harmful impulses unconsciously or in failing to see dangers that can result from not heeding a dream’s warning to moderate or rebalance our behavior (66). As the Zohar recounts: “Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Yossi used to study with Rabbi Simeon; Rabbi Ḥiyya once put to him the following question: ‘We have learned that a dream left uninterpreted is like a letter left unopened.’ Does this mean that the dream comes true without the dreamer being conscious of it, or that it remains unfulfilled? R. Simeon answered: The dream comes true, but without the dreamer being aware of it” (67).

Rabbi Bana-ah taught that “there were twenty-four dream interpreters in Jerusalem. Once I dreamed a dream and I went round to all of them and they all gave different interpretations, and all were fulfilled, thus confirming that which said: ‘All dreams follow the mouth’” (68). At first glance, this might seem overblown, if not fully preposterous. Yet we now know that a single dream can resonate on multiple levels, including different layers of personal meaning and import for one’s immediate community and the greater society. They may even manifest telepathic and non-temporal qualities (69). Even though rabbinic literature does use the number twenty-four as a formulaic expression when it means many, it is quite possible that each interpreter correctly highlighted a different aspect of Rabbi Bana-ah’s dream.

However, lest we think that dream interpretation is a free for all, the Talmudic passage above continues: “Is this notion Scriptural? Yes, it is, as stated by Rabbi Eleazar, ‘Whence do we know that all dreams follow the mouth? Because it says, ‘and it came to pass, as he (Joseph) interpreted to us (Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker), so it was.’” Raba said: “This is only if the interpretation corresponds to the content of the dream: for Scripture says, ‘to each man according to his dream he did interpret’” (Genesis 41:12) (70).
It is now considered a *sine qua non* that any legitimate dream interpretation must not go too far afield into chains of associations or universal symbols but ultimately must remain faithful to the elements of the dream and the dreamer’s experience. Ultimately, the dreamer is the authority on the meaning of his or her dream and it is the dreamer, therefore, who must validate any interpretation with his or her “a-ha” assent (71). As early as the twelfth century, the author of the *Sefer Ḥasidim* stated that, “if an interpretation fits the elements of the dream and the dreamer is satisfied with that interpretation, it is an indication that this is indeed what the dreamer has been shown” (72).

**“Sovereign of the Universe” Revisited**

In my opinion, the same prescient wisdom manifest in the texts cited above inheres in the words of “Sovereign of the Universe” as recited during Birkat Kohanim. The sixteenth century legist, Rabbi Joshua Falk (1555-1614), notes that nowhere within this dream amelioration prayer do the petitioners ask that their troubling dreams stop (73). Then, going further and mirroring both talmudic wisdom and the observations of contemporary psychology, Falk indicates that having troubling dreams is preferable to having no dreams at all. This is why “Sovereign of the Universe” cites Moses sweetening the bitter waters at Mara: had Moses instead prayed that the bitter waters disappear the Israelites would have been left in an even worse state, with the possibility of no water to drink at all (74). Thus the examples of healing cited by this dream prayer demonstrate the purpose and power found in the transformation of harmful conditions. While not intentionally desired, these can strengthen the distressed and their circles in ways unavailable to those who have not had to overcome affliction. Thus Miriam’s healing from leprosy strengthened Israel’s resolve to avoid harmful speech (75) and Naaman’s healing by the prophet Elisha led to the exaltation of the true God in the eyes of the ancient pagan nobility (76).
The aforementioned Rabbi Avraham Hayim Schor highlighted a homeopathic element present in the examples of remedy cited in “Sovereign of the Universe” (77). In several instances, the stated means of healing seem counterintuitive to what one might normally think to be an appropriate cure. Moses cast a tree, bark and all, into the waters of Marah and Elisha poured salt into the contaminated waters of Jericho (78), elements which both normally would render water undrinkable. Hezekiah’s ulcer is healed by applying a poultice of figs, which ordinarily would have exacerbated the boil (79). This insight resonates with what we now know about disturbing dreams: the more terrifying the dreams, the less one really wishes to revisit them. However counterintuitive though it may seem, it is by confronting those disturbing images, sometimes even by engaging them in an imaginary dialogue that we find the potential to discover that they are not harbingers of ill, but are symbols of help or needed warning (80).

My interest in dreams has led me to study aspects of dream interpretation and to train as a dream group leader (81). Once a dreamer reported to me that she was completely overworked yet feared letting go of one of her jobs for financial reasons. One night she dreamed that she and a friend were sitting in the anteroom of a lawyer’s office. Through a partition window they saw three large, shadowy figures enter an inner room. Shots rang out and the two women dropped cowering to the floor. I asked her to contemplatively re-imagine the dream scene and simply ask the figures, “Who are you?” Upon doing so, the figures replied, “We’re bail bondsmen and we’ve come to rescue you.” When asked about the shooting they answered, “Did you think you were going to leave here without some blood being spilled?”

This re-imagining and further engaging with the elements of a dream is but one example of a Jungian contemplative process known as Active Imagination (82). Its practice might offer us a modern twist on the concept of “sweetening” or “transforming the dream,” a contemporary analog to throwing tree bark or salt into the waters.
The dreamer’s imaginary dialogue, described above, uncovered a hopeful message at the core of what she first had experienced with fright. She realized that she could change her work life, but not without some expense to herself and disappointment by those at work who had come to depend on her. And, since dreams are notorious for expressing their meaning through non-literal symbols and wordplay, the term “bail bondsmen” reminded her that her late father had left her some valuable treasury bonds that could help “bail” her out of her stressful work situation (83). Thus her dream was transformed from terror into an intimation of potential blessing as “Sovereign of the Universe” hints can happen by citing God not as eliminating but as transforming Balaam’s words from curses into blessing.

Monford Harris observed that, with the exception of Yom Kippur, all of the occasions when we recite “Sovereign of the Universe” occur during multi-day festivals (84). This insight casts a special light on our understanding of the relationship between Birkat Kohanim and dream amelioration. As a participant in the recurring ritual drama of Birkat Kohanim during these holidays, the dreamer could again and again feel enveloped by its uniquely transformative sense of the Holy. Combined with the concurrent repetition of “Sovereign of the Universe” amid sacred community over the course of these days, the dreamer could find both inspiration and a safe therapeutic setting to process his or her disturbing dream. During this period the dreamer could revisit the dream, re-examine it and possibly reengage with its images, recognize where amends to others might be needed and discern what guidance was being offered to shape future behavior and action. By festival’s end, infused with the spirit of the Priestly Benediction and the hopes “Sovereign of the Universe” convey, the dreamer could feel forgiven, renewed and encouraged upon returning to everyday life.
Healing and Wholeness

Jeremy Taylor, a foremost expert in Dream Studies, is fond of saying, “All dreams come in the service of healing and wholeness…and invite you to new understandings” (85). The words and practices associated with “Sovereign of the Universe” seem structured to lead the troubled worshipper to just such realizations. Its phrases impel us to admit that we don’t know the meaning of our dreams and remind us that, like Joseph’s dreams, their ultimate purpose might only be revealed over time (86). Its examples point us to the healing potential nestled amid even frightening dream images. This unfolding prayerful process, repeated amid the compelling ritual drama of Birkat Kohanim, can inspire us to revisit and explore previously unrecognized aspects of our dreams and our lives, buoying us with the promise that both can be transformed for our good.

The current version of “Sovereign of the Universe” offers an addendum to the words found in the Talmud (87). At the end of the prayer we add: May (God) protect me, be gracious to me, and find favor in me, Amen. These three requests invoke the blessings found respectively in each of the three lines of Birkat Kohanim. It expresses a hope as relevant today as it was when “Sovereign of the Universe” was first composed. Through that divine sense of safety, grace and favor so movingly promised by Birkat Kohanim, may we find healing messages amid even our most troubling dreams, thus transforming them and our lives for good. Amen

Endnotes

1. B. B’rakhot 55b, attributed to one of three late talmudic figures, Ameimar, Mar Zutra, or Rav Ashi.
2. Literally “to ascend a platform,” dukhenen is a Yiddish term in widespread use in Jewish American English to denote the rite in which which the kohanim bless the community with Birkat Kohanim.
4. Joel 2:28
5. Kohelet 5:6
7. B. Horayot. 13b.
8. B. B’rakhot 55a, citing Isaiah 38:16.
11. Harris, *Studies*, chs. 4 and 5.
15. Fredrick (Fritz ) Perls (d. 1970) was a founder of Gestalt Therapy. See “An Introduction to Fritz Perls’ Dream Interpretation Techniques” at http://gestalt-annarbor.org/Reading_Room/Perls%20Dream%20Interpretation.pdf.
16. For a full description of this research complete with diagrams, see Robert Hoss’ excellent website, www.dreamscience.org.
18. Ibid.
21. B. Sorah 48b, Sanhedrin 11a, and Yoma 9b.
22. B. B’rakhot 55b.
23. B. Hagigah 5b.
24. Ibid.
28. B. B’rakhot 10b, Sanhedrin 30a.
32. *Zohar* I 183a-b.
33. Solomon Almoli, *Pitron Halomot*, *sha•ar aleph*, as translated by Joel Covitz in his *Visions in the Night* (Toronto, Ontario: Inner City Books, 2000) pp. 88-92. Almoli’s categorization of dreams is of particular interest. Relegating “psychological status dreams” to the realm of the imagination, which spins visions from the dreamer’s daily thoughts, Almoli then describes: (1) Prophetic Dreams with their direct message from God; (2) Ordinary Dreams instilled by the *ba•al ha•halomot* which are a variant of prophecy still vouchsafed to Israel, and; (3) Magical Dreams which are self-induced by the dark arts of sorcerers and are to be repudiated.
34. Interestingly enough current neurobiology has discovered that the aspect of our brain structure which controls the generation of motor commands, the Primary Motor Cortex, is inactive when we sleep. See Robert Hoss, “The Science of Dreaming,” Section 3.1 at www.Dreamscience.org
35. *Zohar* op cit.
37. Prime examples of a visitation dream and an ascent vision can be found respectively in the *Sefer Ha•hezyonot* of Rabbi Hayyim Vital (1543-1620) III:9 and in the *Tz’va•at Ha-ribash* (*The Ethical Will of the Baal Shem Tov*). Translations of both texts can be found in Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977) pp. 127-128 and pp. 149-153.
39. Berakhot 57b Our Rabbis taught: [If one dreams of] a corpse in the house, it is a sign of peace in the house.
40. Ibid. 55b.
41. B. Shabbat 11a.
42. Here the Talmud already prescribes a condition that modern dream work considers axiomatic: one should only share dreams with those whom the dreamer considers emotionally safe. The Zohar further cautions: “And Joseph dreamed a dream, which he told to his brothers and they hated him the more… from this we learn that a man should not tell his dream save to a
friend, otherwise the listener may pervert the significance of the dream” (Zohar I 183b).

43. The primary source of this rite is B. B’rakhot 55b. The entire ritual as summarized here, including post-talmudic additions, is detailed in Harris, *Studies*, pp. 98-102, which he cites from Zeligman Baer’s *Seder Avodat Yisrael* (Berlin: Schocken, 1936), pp. 578-579.

44. Harris, ibid., suggests that the three friends might constitute a *beit-din*, a religious Court, which can be composed of three lay people for small civil matters.


46. Psalm 40:19, Isaiah 30:10, and 1 Samuel 14:45.


48. The full text can be found on p. 1. In many Hebrew texts this prayer is referred to by the first word of the prayer, *Ribon*.

49. For a full discussion of these issues see the Vilna Gaon’s commentary on the *Shulhan Arukh*, the *Sefer Eliyahu Rabbah*, to S.A. *Orakh Ḥayyim* 130:1.

50. B. B’rakhot 55b. Originally this passage was recited if one couldn’t finish “Sovereign of the Universe” before the *kohanim* concluded the benediction.

51. B. B’rakhot 55b.

52. Ibid., p. 56a.


54. B. B’rakhot 19a.

55. *Sefer Torat Ḥayyim* on B. Bava Kama 55a.

56. Cf., e.g., 1 Samuel 10:6 or 16:13.

57. B’reishit Rabbah 17:5 and B. B’rakhot 57b.


59. Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, p. 1. See the above section of this paper When We Sleep: The Process of Dreaming.

60. B. B’rakhot 55a.

61. For anticipation of Jung’s concepts of the collective unconscious. see the *Avot D’rabi Natan*, ch. 31 & B. Niddah 30b; for Jung’s anima and animus, cf. Zohar III 43a; for Jung’s concept of projection, see B. Kiddushin 70a.

62. The aspects of our brain structure responsible for spatial imagery, pictographs and emotional processing, particularly in the right brain hemisphere, remain active as we sleep; those associated with logic, planning, inhibition and episodic memory, especially in the brain’s left hemisphere, are blocked. For a full treatment see Robert Hoss. *Dream Language* (Ashland, OR: Innersource, 2005) Ch 3.

64. B. B’rakhot 55b. This homily is based on a play on words is based savei’a and sheva, both of which contain the same consonants and would thus appear identical to each other in an unvocalized text.

65. REM (Rapid Eye Movement) is one of two states that alternate during the natural cycle of brain activity when we sleep. It is the state (the other is called N[on]REM) most associated with dreaming. See Robert Hoss. www.dreamscience.org. “The Science of Dreaming” Section I

66. See Carl Jung, Memories, Dreams and Reflections edited by Aniela Jaffe, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Random House, 1961) concerning a mountaineer who ignored his dreams envisioning his stepping out into space. Jung, who tried unsuccessfully to get this patient to heed this dream warning, later learned that he had fallen to his death while mountain climbing.

67. Zohar I: 183a-b Carl Jung cites two instances of the consequences paid by those insensitive to the warnings of their dreams in Man and His Symbols, edited by Carl Jung (New York: Dell, 1968), p. 34.

68. B. B’rakhot 55b.

69. For a full and accessible treatment of each of these types of dreams based on forty years of study, see Jeremy Taylor, The Wisdom of Your Dreams (New York: Tarcher, 2009).

70. B. B’rakhot 55b.


72. Sefer Hasidim, §605, as translated by Finkel, p. 341.

73. P’rishah on S. A. Orakh Hayyim 130.


76. 2 Kings 5.

77. Sefer Torat Hayim on B. Bava Kamma 55a. It is interesting to note how this observation anticipated by 350 years Dr Arnold Beiser’s, “The Paradoxical Theory of Change,” which first appeared in Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd’s Gestalt Therapy Now (Gestalt Journal Press, 1970). “…The Gestalt therapist believes in encouraging the patient to enter and become whatever he is experiencing at the moment. He believes with Proust, ‘To heal a suffering one must experience it to the full.’” See www.gestalttherapy.org/-publications.

78. 2 Kings 2:19-22.

79. 2 Kings 27:7 and Isaiah 38:21.


81. On the nature and dynamics of dream groups see Robert Haden, Jr. Unopened Letters from God (Hendersonville, NC: Haden Institute

83. In his *Interpretation of Dreams* (op. cit., p. 43) Freud notes that ancient Near Eastern Dream Books had recognized the prevalence of punning and the non-literal nature of dreams millennia ago. The Talmud, at B. B’rakhot 56b-57a, is replete with examples of such wordplay, among them: Our Rabbis taught: If one sees a reed [kaneh] in a dream, one may hope for wisdom, for it says: Get [k’neh] wisdom” (Proverbs 4:5)...The Rabbis taught: (If one dreams of) a corpse in the house it is a sign of peace in the house [perhaps indicating that old enmities have died, allowing for the rebirth of domestic harmony].

84. Harris, *Studies*, p. 104-105.


86. B. B’rakhot 55b points out that it took Joseph twenty-two years to appreciate fully the implications of his youthful dreams.

Blessed are the Single-Hearted
On Doing the One Thing Necessary
Dennis J. Billy, C.Ss.R.

This lecture treats one of the deepest longing of the human heart: the desire to see God face-to-face. More specifically, it is about one of the beatitudes from Matthew’s Gospel, the sixth one to be precise, the one that is normally translated: “Blessed are the clean in heart, for they will see God” (Mt 5:8), the first part of which I prefer to translate as “Blessed are the single-hearted” (All Scripture references come from the New American Bible, 2011). My reason for preferring “single-heartedness” stems from my conviction that the beatitude in question concerns not merely being unsullied by worldly cares and the desires of the flesh, but “singleness of purpose and loyalty to God.” As one author puts it, such an understanding of the beatitude “is more basic than moral purity, for it deals with honesty and integrity in our entire being” (Doohan, 1993, p. 82). If we ever hope to see God face-to-face, then our hearts must be entirely focused on him and on implementing his plan for our lives.

A Look at the Sports World

I think we can find a fitting analogy for what it means to be single-hearted in the world of sports. One of the things we admire most about our sports heroes is their capacity to stay focused under intense pressure for extended periods of time. Whether it be Tiger Woods putting on the eighteenth green to clutch yet another PGA
tournament, or Roger Federer netting yet another Grand Slam title, or Michael Phelps splashing his way to a record eight gold medals in Olympic swimming, or Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt smashing the world record in the 100 meter dash yet again, we stand in awe of their capacity to overcome physical adversity and the inner demons of self-doubt and lack of confidence to rise to the occasion and sustain one stellar performance after another in the midst of difficult odds and stiff competition.

Such athletes compete as much against themselves as they do against others. They keep their eyes on the prize over the long haul and reap the fruits of a disciplined regimen of physical and mental training that puts them at the top of their game and gives them an edge against their competitors. They give their hearts to the goal before them and are willing to face impossible odds in order to achieve it. We admire these heroes, and a part of us wants to be like them. What makes them stand out is their single-hearted devotion to being the very best in their field. They have focused on a goal and dedicated themselves entirely to achieving it. We are inspired by their athletic pursuits and would like to do something similar in our lives that we could be proud of.

Although what I have said about our sports heroes can just as easily be applied to any field of human endeavor—be it teaching, law, medicine, the arts, or what have you—the reason why I chose an analogy from sports to introduce my topic is because the Apostle Paul uses it to make a similar point about the spiritual life. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, he likens the Christian life to running a race: “Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one” (1Cor 9:24-25). In his Letter to the Philippians he employs the same analogy when referring to himself: “I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14).
For Paul, the life of Christian discipleship means having single-hearted devotion to winning the imperishable crown of everlasting life. Like the runners in a race, we must deny ourselves many things in order to achieve this goal. Unlike all the runners in a race, however, it is possible for each of us to win. This is what the good news of Jesus Christ is all about. God holds out to each of us the hope of one day seeing him face-to-face. Winning this imperishable crown is the one thing that matters. All else is secondary and, if care is not taken, possibly even a hindrance. As Jesus tells his disciples, “What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life” (Mk 8:36)?

Success, we all know, is fleeting and uncertain. The Apostle Paul was well aware that even the most devoted runners could stumble and fall. He was very conscious of his own weaknesses and worldly struggles and averted to them at various points in his letters (Rom 7:14-25; 2Cor 12:7-10; 1Tm 1:15). Despite his numerous shortcomings, however, he firmly believed that because of Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection, each of us could hope one day of seeing God face-to-face. All that was necessary was for us to open ourselves to him and allow him to gently shape our hearts so that we could follow him all the days of our lives with greater love and affection.

The Rich Young Man

In stark contrast to Paul’s purposeful dedication to Christ and the call of Christian discipleship is the story of the rich young man in Matthew’s Gospel (Mt 19: 16-22). As the story goes, Jesus has just finished telling his disciples that they must become like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. Moved by these words a young man approaches Jesus and asks him what he must do to gain eternal life. Jesus tells him to keep the commandments and goes on to cite many of those listed in the Decalogue: “You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear
false witness; honor your father and your mother’ and ‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mt 19: 18-19). The young man tells Jesus that he has kept these commandments and wants to know what more he must do. Jesus looks at the young man and tells him that if he wants to be perfect he must sell all that he owns, give the money to the poor, and then follow him. Hearing these words, the young man goes away sad, for he is a man of great wealth.

This rich young man represents the epitome of someone with a restless, divided heart. He yearns for everlasting life but is not willing to place his complete trust in God. He keeps the commandments but cannot bring himself to let go of his many possessions, the very things that weigh him down and prevent him from following the way of the Lord Jesus with his whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. He finds himself pulled in opposite directions: toward God and toward his many possessions. He walks away sad, because he cannot bring himself to do the one thing being asked of him at the moment. Jesus then turns to his disciples and warns them of the danger of riches, saying that it is more difficult for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19: 23-24).

The story of the rich young man resembles our own. We, too, can often find ourselves pulled in opposite directions. We, too, yearn for eternal life, yet find it difficult to let go of the very things that hinder us from achieving it. We, too, feel burdened by the things of this world yet are afraid to let go and place our complete trust in God. It remains to be seen just what we will do. Will we follow the way of the Lord Jesus or walk away sad? The choice is before us and the outcome to a great extent rests on our shoulders.

Have you ever wondered why so many people in this world suffer from depression? I understand that this is a complex question, and I do not wish to call into question any of the underlying medical and psychological causes of the condition. I cannot help but feel, however, that there may also be an underlying spiritual reason for it. Could it not be that at least part of the reason why so many of us
suffer from a constant, throbbing, and gnawing sense of emptiness inside of ourselves is because somewhere along the line we have lost touch with the only thing that will make us truly happy? Could it be that we have misplaced the true allegiance of our hearts in exchange for false substitutes that can in no way fill our deepest yearnings for happiness and transcendence? It was St. Augustine who said, “[Lord], you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you” (Augustine, 1963, p. 17). I sometimes wonder if the melancholy and deep sense of sadness that pervades the lives of so many people in this world (and, at times, possibly our own) is due to misplaced affections, unrealistic hopes, and a failure to recognize that, in the end, only God can truly satisfy the unquiet and restless longings of the human heart. Rather than emulating the Apostle Paul who, despite his struggles and weaknesses, focused his entire attention on the finish line and ran toward the prize to which God had called him, we follow instead the example of the rich young man, who turned from Jesus and walked away sad. I sometimes wonder if at least a partial cause of depression is our refusal to let go of the things we think will make us happy, but ultimately do nothing but get in the way of our ongoing transformation in Christ. Generally good in themselves and most likely different for each person, these things, whatever they may be—power, wealth, fame, pleasure—eventually lose their glitter and fail to satisfy. Instead of making us happy, they weigh us down and, if we are not careful, can obtain extraordinary power over us. Our possessions, in other words, have the ability to take possession of us. Instead of freeing us, they weigh us down and eventually enslave us. We ultimately become them and, in so doing, lose our souls. This is what C. S. Lewis calls the “abolition of man,” which comes from focusing our heart’s deepest desire on the things that will ultimately enslave us rather than on the one “thing” that will make us free and truly happy (Lewis, 1947/1973, pp. 83-84).
An Invisible Hold

It would be a mistake for us to think, however, that the healing of a divided heart can take place in a single instant or that happiness comes about by letting go of our material possessions in one fell swoop. When we unburden ourselves of the things that weigh us down, these very things continue to have a subtle, invisible hold over us. While it is true that all things are possible for God, it seems that most of us spend our entire lives struggling against these opposing internal forces. This holds true even for those who have entered the priesthood and religious life and who have publicly professed to live a dedicated life of Christian discipleship. The story is told in the traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy of a certain Abba Moses, a desert father who instructed his disciples on purity of heart with these words:

We give up country, family, possessions and everything worldly in order to acquire purity of heart. If we forget this purpose we cannot avoid frequently stumbling and losing our way, for we will be walking in the dark and straying from the proper path. This has happened to many men who at the start of their ascetic life gave up all wealth, possessions and everything worldly, but who later flew into a rage over a fork, a needle, a rush or a book. This would not have happened to them had they borne in mind the purpose for which they gave up everything (The Philokalia, 1979, pp. 95-96).

What are the things in life that can easily throw you into a rage? They may not be as simple and unimportant as a needle or a fork, but Abba Moses’ words challenge us to examine our hearts and identify those small and seemingly insignificant things that still have power over us and have caused us to compromise the primary allegiance of
our hearts. He reminds us that there are other things beside material possessions that can gain power over and enslave the soul. In the Christian tradition they are known as the Seven Deadly Sins—and Anger is one of them. The other six are: Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth.

I sometimes wonder if we are fully aware of how easily we can deceive ourselves by falling under the sway of these powerful internal forces. By focusing on small, petty, seemingly insignificant, almost invisible objects of desire (e.g., small expressions in everyday life of one’s wealth, power, and importance) these vices can become deeply rooted in us and influence our behavior in ways in which we are not even fully conscious. Abba Moses reminds us that to be pure and single-hearted we must also confront our wild and unruly passions and cooperate with the movements of God’s grace in our lives so that they will be tamed by the gentle sway of reason’s rule. Only then will we be free to follow God’s will for our lives. Only then will we be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. Only then will we be able to see God face-to-face.

To put it another way, we must train our souls rigorously so that the image of God in us can be polished and the light of God’s grace allowed to shine in us ever more brightly and transform us into the sons and daughters he originally intended us to be. This can happen only to the pure and single-hearted. It is the primary requirement for all those who desire entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It alone will enable them to keep their sights fixed on their final destination.

It is also important for us to remember that this kind of purity of heart is first and foremost a work of God and is made possible through the action of his grace. The second-century Church father, Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 180) affirms this in Against the Heresies (4.20.5) when he says: “It is true, because of the greatness and inexpressible glory of God, that ‘man shall not see me [God] and
live,’ for the Father cannot be grasped. But because of God’s love and goodness toward us, and because he can do all things, he goes so far as to grant those who love him the privilege of seeing him…. For ‘what is impossible for men is possible for God” (Vatican, 1994, p. 428). The vision of God, in his mind, is a gift of God given only to those who truly love him. In this respect, the pure and single-hearted love God so much that God has decided to unite their hearts with his. Purity and singleness of heart, in other words, is a total gift from God and cannot be achieved by human effort alone.

Centuries later, the author of the eighteenth-century spiritual classic, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, usually attributed to Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751), also refers to the purity and singleness of heart in terms of gift:

Let others, Lord, ask you for all sorts of gifts. Let them increase their prayers and entreaties. But I, my Lord, ask for one thing only and have only a single prayer—give me a pure heart! How happy we are if our hearts are pure! Through the ardor of our faith we see God as he is. We see him in everything and at every moment working within and around us. And in all things we are both his subject and his instrument. He guides us everywhere and leads us to everything. Very often we do not think about it, but he thinks for us. It is enough that we have desired what is happening to us and must happen to us by his will (de Caussade, 1975, p. 68).

Here, purity or singleness of heart is depicted as a gift from God that cleanses the soul of its inordinate passions and empowers it to see the hand of God in all the circumstances of one’s present life. The gift of self-abandonment helps us to find God in the duties and responsibilities of the present moment and readies us for the perfect
vision that will come in the world to come. When seen in this light, purity and singleness of heart is that God-given quality of soul that enables us to participate mystically in Christ’s humble self-emptying, a process that helps us to forget ourselves and put the interest of others before our own.

The Pure and Single-of-Heart

How can we further describe this quality of soul? What sets pure and single-hearted persons apart? What specific qualities do they have that makes them noticeable? What can we point to that will help us recognize them when they enter our midst? In trying to answer these questions, I would like to examine four representative thinkers from different periods of the Church’s past: Augustine of Hippo, Thomas, and Alphonsus de Liguori, three of the great thinkers of the Catholic tradition, and, Søren Kierkegaard from the Protestant tradition. When reading them, I was happily surprised by the common ground in their presentations. Because they differ greatly in the philosophical assumptions they bring to the table of theological inquiry, it was unusual to find such a close convergence of ideas in their description of purity and singleness of heart. Augustine’s Neoplatonism, Aquinas’s Aristotelianism, Alphonsus’s legal casuistry, and Kierkegaard’s incipient existentialism influenced but did not eschew their interpretation of Jesus’ sixth beatitude. Time allows me only a brief summary of their thinking on purity and singleness of heart. Let us take them in the order of their appearance on the stage of world history.

Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa, often referred to as the “Doctor of Grace,” and one of the great theologians of late antiquity and arguably of all time, links purity of heart specifically to simplicity of heart: “For this is a clean heart, one that is a simple heart; and as the light of this world cannot be seen save with sound eyes, so God cannot be seen unless that is sound by which He can be seen” (Augustine, 1948, p. 15). The beatific vision,
in his mind, takes place in the seat of the heart. To see God properly, the heart must be sound: it must be pure, clean, simple, and undivided. Such a heart enables us to focus entirely on the things of the spirit and not those of the flesh. It helps us to be purposeful and determined in our love of God and in our pursuit of heavenly things. For Augustine, it is no mere accident that the Beatitudes appear at the very beginning of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, a treatise which he describes as representing “the highest norms of morality, the perfect pattern of the Christian life” (Augustine, 1948, p. 11).

Thomas Aquinas (1224/25-1274), a medieval Dominican friar often referred to as the “Angelical Doctor” and representing the height of the achievements of medieval scholasticism, maintains that purity and singleness of heart has two primary qualities: the cleansing of our unruly passions and the purging of the mind so it can perceive the truth more readily (Aquinas, 1947, p. 1209). For him, purity and singleness of heart involves cleansing the affections of their inordinate tendencies and cleansing the mind so that it might be able to perceive more clearly in this life. He also reminds us that the sight of God is imperfect in this life and perfect in the next. Our imperfect vision of God comes through the gift of understanding which enables us to discern the difference between what is of God and not of God. Our perfect vision of God comes in the beatific vision when we behold the divine essence and see God face-to-face (Aquinas, 1947, p. 1209).

Alphonsus de Liguori (1696-1787), founder of the Redemptorists, patron saint of confessors and moral theologians, often referred to as the “Most Zealous Doctor” and a representative of the age of moral casuistry at its best, identifies two requirements for loving God with all one’s heart: “to clear away the dirt from it and to fill it with holy love” (de Liguori, 1997, p. 111). He says there are four ways of telling whether our works have been truly done for God: (1) we are not disturbed when our undertakings are unsuccessful; (2) we rejoice at the good done by others, as if it had
been done by ourselves; (3) we do not desire one office more than another, but are content with whatever we have been assigned; and (4) we seek no approbation or thanks for our good works (de Liguori, 1929, pp. 600-1).

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish philosopher and Lutheran theologian known as the “Father of Existentialism,” identifies two important qualities of purity and singleness of heart: (1) a willingness to do everything for the Good, and (2) a willingness to suffer everything for the Good (Kierkegaard, 1956, pp.121, 148). On the negative side, he identifies four barriers or obstacles to it: (1) desiring the Good for the sake of reward, (2) willing the Good out of fear of punishment, (3) willing the Good and its victory out of a self-centered willfulness, and (4) willing the Good only to a certain degree (Kierkegaard, 1956, pp.69, 79, 99, 104). To be pure and single-of-heart, for Kierkegaard, means that we must take our responsibilities before God seriously by willing and doing the Good at all times and in all circumstances (Kierkegaard, 1956, pp. 214).

Augustine. Aquinas. Alphonsus. Kierkegaard. To my mind, these thinkers complement each other when it comes to the sixth beatitude. Each would heartily agree that the pure and single-of-heart will one day see God, because they have purged their hearts of all self-interest and allowed them to be filled by the illuminating love of the Holy Spirit. Each would agree that the pure and single-of-heart desire but one thing: to do God’s will for them in their lives. Each would also agree that temptation and an undue attachment to the things of this world weighs the heart down and leads to divisiveness and “double-mindedness.” This common ground allows us get back to our original questions: What sets pure and single-hearted persons apart? What specific qualities do they have that makes them noticeable? What can we point to that will help us recognize them when they enter our midst? From everything that has been said up until now, it should by now be clear that the pure and single-of-heart desire to love God with every fiber of their being. In return for their love, God blesses them with a twofold gift.
First, his grace cleanses and purifies their passions so they are no longer distracted by the cares of this world or hindered by temptations that divide their affections and put in them a state of double-mindedness. Secondly, God’s grace strengthens their intellects through the gift of understanding and enables them to see God imperfectly in this life, as a reflection in a mirror, and perfectly in the next by way of the beatific vision.

What do pure and single-hearted persons desire? They desire one thing and one thing only: to do God’s will. They are willing to suffer and endure all things, even death itself, in order to achieve it. They do so not in order to make satisfaction for their sins, or to gain some temporal or even spiritual reward, but simply because they love God and desire to please him. They seek God in all things. They long to do his will and welcome whatever crosses come their way. They are patient in the midst of adversity, persevering in their faithfulness, and steadfast in their desire to do God’s will, the one thing that is really necessary.

What are the signs of purity and singleness of heart? Single-hearted persons are not disturbed when their undertakings are unsuccessful. They rejoice at the good done by others, as if it were their own. They are not ambitious about the positions they are asked to fill. They do not seek praise or approval for their good works. They see God’s will as it is manifested to them in the duties and responsibilities of the present moment. They believe that God is working at every moment both within them and in the world around them. They trust God above all else and believe that all things work out for the good.

Who is the model of the pure and single-hearted person? Our discourse now takes us back to the New Testament and the longstanding wisdom of Church tradition to find such a person in Mary, the Mother of Jesus. “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you” (Lk 1:28). These words present the Blessed Mother as God’s highly-favored daughter and the epitome of someone with an undivided heart, someone who wishes to do one thing and only one
thing, indeed, the one thing necessary. “May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). Her humble fiat reflects her dogged desire to do God’s will, even in the most difficult of circumstances. It reminds us that even though her heart was deeply troubled by the angel’s words, she received them with joy and trusted that the Lord would do great things for her. “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord” (Lk 1:46). She, more than anyone else, sought to carry out God’s will in her life with every fiber of her being. These words reveal the great joy she found in doing the Lord’s will, regardless of the deep grief and suffering it would cause her. “…blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Lk 1:42). She not only carried Jesus in her womb, but her heart was uniquely united to his. Her heart was one with his—and his with hers. These words remind us that Mary brought Christ into the world and could do so only because her entire being—her mind, her soul, her very womb—was uniquely prepared by God to receive the seed of humanity’s hope and ultimate transformation. Like Mary, God empties the hearts of the pure and single-hearted and fills them with his love. Like Mary, the pure and single-hearted are blessed because God has blessed them for their sincere desire to love and serve him. Like Mary, they see God because God peers into their hearts, opens his heart to them, and dwells within them. This mutual indwelling of hearts is a mark of friendship and a sure sign of purity and singleness of heart (Wadell, 1988, pp. 130-41).

Conclusion

The question that should remain for us is not what kind of heart do you have? I think most of us already know the answer to that question. I think the real question is what kind of heart would you like to have? And closely following that one is the question: Is your heart gradually becoming more and more divided, restless, and burdened by the worries and cares of the world or is it more and more focused on the finish line, on doing the one thing that matters,
on winning the imperishable crown of everlasting life? Such questions need to be pondered deeply in the quiet of our hearts where we can be honest with ourselves before God and ask his help in doing the one thing that matters. “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God” (Mt 5:8). When we look within our hearts, we may feel that such a possibility, to see God face-to-face, is difficult to imagine and perhaps even a bit presumptuous. We need to remember, however, Jesus’ words to his disciples as he watched the rich young man walk away in sadness: “…for God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26). Let us give God room to purify, illumine, and ultimately unite our hearts with his. Let us turn to him with open hearts and ask him to make them pure and singularly focused on doing the one thing necessary, that is, making the loving fiat of Mary and Jesus’ noble embrace of the will of the Father our own. Let us so for the coming of his kingdom and that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

References


Pastoral Nurture through Psychotherapeutics

Opening Pathways for Wholeness and Connection within a Companioning Relationship

Beatrice H. Broder-Oldach

Spiritual or compassionate care involves serving the whole person—the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual (Pulchaski, 2001). Within religion, psychology and social science are many helping roles and tools for the care and nurture of the human spirit. Spiritual companioning, also named as spiritual direction, is an offering where a companion or director accompanies another in a conversation around spiritual journey. The direction of the conversation and journey belongs to the pilgrim, with the companion accompanying as a soul friend, and a mindful facilitator. As spiritual companioning involves healing and wholeness, it can be considered as a journey involving a person’s relationship and experience of the Holy, of God (Boston College). The process of psychotherapy is similarly about health and wholeness, through engagement of personal issues through lenses of psychological theories and techniques in the context of a relationship with a therapist. Pastoral psychotherapy recognizes the presence of the sacred or spiritual as active within human beings, and brings a sense of God’s presence in therapeutic process. The therapist is both professionally competent and oriented to ministry. Within the specialized ministry of chaplaincy, a minister meets and serves the spiritual needs of people
outside the walls of the traditional church, in a specialized context. Typical settings include military situations, health care settings, corporate and community, including curbside ministry with people who are homeless (Broder-Oldach, 2010) (Chaplaincy, 2014) (Honan, 2012) (Ecclesia Ministries Mission, 2010). While chaplaincy and pastoral psychotherapy share hope and intention for wholeness in body, mind, and spirit, psychotherapy typically unfolds over a period of time, within a long term relationship, while the care of a chaplain frequently involves a situational or short term relationship. Spiritual companioning relationships are typically of longer duration, though pilgrimage implies openness to meeting and traveling with others in organically occurring situations along the way. Although classic schools of psychotherapy have been associated with long term approaches of caring, within them are powerful perspectives, and techniques well suited for contextual and situational ministry of chaplaincy, where the potential is available in the moment for illumination, comfort, harm reduction, and the encounter or cultivation of a growing edge of therapeutic readiness. Chaplains journey in this organic style, as Anam Cara companions and also as a spiritual caregiver bringing spiritual and psychological assessment and intervention skills to those who, for whatever reasons, do not fully engage traditional sources of mental health care. Cherry picking selected fruit from classic psychotherapy creates a rich, light weight toolbox for those who care for others in contextual ministry settings. Pioneering analyst and theorist Sigmund Freud devoted his life to the science of our unconscious and the inner workings of our mind. His theories regarding psychosexual development, levels of consciousness, personality structure and therapeutic techniques rocked psychology, breaking new ground. Freud’s understanding of the inner work of the conscious and unconscious, with the tensions of the id, ego and super ego offer the spiritual care provider valuable insight into the human psyche and experience. The lengthy process of psychoanalysis and therapy a la Freud is not an organic fit in the acute care setting, where short term hospital are emphasized within
health care reform. In street chaplaincy, such therapeutic work is simply not affordable for the poor, and too lengthy for those lacking capacity to handle the commitment and vulnerability of the therapeutic relationship. As a companioning relationship takes shape, Freud’s theories can assist a spiritual caregiver in understanding issues of development and assessing areas of spiritual pain. Such understanding may provide some direction for both care, comfort and harm reduction in people unlikely to pursue psychoanalysis, but in need of relief and healing in areas of spiritual pain, including post-traumatic stress, childhood abuse, deep poverty and addiction (Morgan J. H., 2010).

Similarly, Carl Jung provides both insight into and respect for the richness within the human psyche. Like Freud, the process of psychoanalysis and dream study requires the kind of commitment beyond the capacity of acute care settings, requiring faithful engagement beyond the capacity of many dealing with addictions and poverty. Whatever a person’s state of health in relation to body, mind, and spirit, there is a measure of common human experience within Jung’s observations around dreams and archetypes. In his description of the human heart and soul as the window to the human psyche, Jung honors the holy in people, becoming a physician scientist champion raising up the place of spiritual purpose as part of holistic health. As in spiritual companioning, Jung understood the importance of building trust and relationship, wanting to help people to manage their own neurosis. While his use of archetypes, dream interpretation, and imaginative conversation were practiced most frequently in long term therapeutic relationships, these concepts can assist the short term pastoral care provider in assessment and direction of care, and even beginning relationship. Jung’s emphasis on archetypes and dream offers a landscape for entering even the snippet of a personal story, opening up a means for those with challenges like these to express themselves through storytelling and art as well as verbally. Exploration of the archetypes in the context of relaxed conversation about life history has potential for illuminating issues for support. In
the landscape of extremes found in street life, archetypes are readily accessible in the sensory experience of observing or participating in the grittiness of this extreme poverty. Where poverty and addiction impact traditional service delivery, help can still be offered in nontraditional settings like soup kitchens, chapel spaces, even on the street corner through use of faithful visitation and intentionality in drawing upon aspects of Jung’s archetypes, dream interpretation, and imaginative conversation. For the mentally ill person dually stressed by homelessness or physical illness, relational interventions without involvement of test or measurement have the potential to bridge mistrust, provide momentary comfort and potentially open the potential for readiness to journey deeper into opportunity for help and healing.

Jung’s concept of the mask requires careful engagement always, particularly with those dealing with trauma and addiction. The function of the mask and the presence of the shadow are delicate areas, requiring deep trust and acceptance for growth to be possible in the absence of the mask, behind which lies the false persona. Understanding Jungian concepts at work helps the caregiver to choose how and when and what to engage or not engage, while drawing heavily on presence and acceptance, using great care. Chaplains offering care among street populations encounter numbers of people struggling with addictions, trauma, shame and isolation. People hungry for relationship may be unable to trust and reveal true self. People hungry for relationship may choose inappropriate relationships for sharing vulnerability. Jung helps the chaplain observe for these situations and assess the qualities and boundaries, both personal and professional, of spiritual care informed through the gifts within his school of psychotherapy (Morgan J. H., 2010).

Erikson similarly offers valuable resources for spiritual accompaniment and pilgrimage, with short term therapeutic intervention. His eight stages of human development, expressed in the tensions of extremes (e.g. trust vs mistrust) are useful guides for professionals working with children and adults in helping disciplines.
Erikson perceived that conflict and crisis are necessary to propel an individual to growth and change, to a new stage and a turning point in the individual’s life. His framework offers an understanding of personality development drawn from observations across some cultures and all age groups. Erikson was a keen observer, contributing substantial information regarding the role of play in the personality development of children. He observed the importance of primary caregiver on the development of the child. His breadth of observation gives credibility to his concepts, allowing a chaplain to offer care, meeting an individual as they are, where they are, and wherever s/he may come from. Erikson’s framework of stages, and his style of expressing the stages as tensions (e.g. generativity vs stagnation) are useful as an individual or community reveals within a companioning relationship spiritual and emotional themes operational within. Legacy Eriksonians, Carol Gilligan and James Fowler further expand spiritual care resources with new explorations of psychological development in girls and in identification of stages of spiritual development from cradle to grave. Such insight into the dynamics can impact the spiritual journey, perhaps opening guidance within the companion for the enrichment of the pilgrim. Acceptance of the interior process within the spirit and psyche may become a pathway on the spiritual journey. Within vulnerable populations, the moments themselves may be experiences of healing, or reduction of a fragmented self. In some, the moments may function as opportunities for a person to become ready to grow (Erikson, 1993) (Fowler, 1995) (Gilligan, 1993).

Theorist Alfred Adler pioneered a new psychology, individual psychology. Adler’s perspectives resonate with the ministry of street chaplaincy in a number of ways. Adler seems to have a holistic view of the person, emphasizing an individual’s health and strength, over illness. As a physician, Adler brought a new perspective of mental health care, emphasizing preventative strategies for sustaining health over medical cure of illness as the point of entry for mental health care. Adler’s view of the wholeness of human beings offers a
systemic approach to mental health care and can be supportive within companioning ministries offered in context. In relationship, the opportunity to be heard completely and understood is highly valued among patients and families, and hard earned in street ministry. Spiritual care and spiritual care research today emphasizes wholeness and healing in body, mind and spirit. Such an attitude embodies a sense of the dignity of the human person. Adler’s attitude about wholeness of the person is made visible within best practices and experiences of street ministers and chaplains to the homeless (Honan, 2012) (Kehoe, 2009) (Rennebaum, 2008). This approach resists diagnosis and pathology of behavior, turning instead toward a positive psychology emphasizing strengths. Abraham Maslow also engages a positive psychology, offered within contextual ministry tenderly and gently as invitation to relationship among the suffering and vulnerable. Engaging the positive “who we are” opens far more relationships than highlighting the places that are weak or ill. This attitude is in keeping with Adler’s view that feelings of inferiority and inadequacy can be stunting, and damaging. Themes of inferiority and experiences of being bullied or bullying are commonly heard among the homeless and addicted. In the face of such struggles, Adler’s prescription emphasis on the cultivation of confidence and security in the raising of children, broadening appreciation of assets and strengths across disciplines makes organic sense. In acute care chaplaincy and in street ministry, there is a need for rapid establishment of trust and spiritual assessment, accompanied by a sense of shared humanity, if there is to be any intervention. Building up the individual, à la Adler is vital in the establishment of relationship, and the ability to help another. Like Adler, spiritual care practices frequently require the use of anecdotal and observational assessment obtained through the mindful, gut intuition of the companion. Adler’s view of every person as an individual whole supports a basic underpinning of companioning ministries revealing that the individual directs the course, with the accompaniment of the guide. The connection of relationship is essential for this journey,
striking a counterbalance to his view that it is dysfunctional relationship which roots mental illness. Stories of brokenness among the homeless illustrate truth in this kernel (Morgan J. H., 2010) (Rennebaum, 2008).

Spiritual companioning ministries among people in deep poverty and those affected by addictions can also turn to the work of Abraham Maslow, whose theory of human motivation explores the influential relationship between basic human needs for survival, belonging and growing. As poverty, mental illness and addiction involve complex issues typically interfering with successful therapy, Maslow is golden in providing another template for understanding the dimensions of human need at work in another, offering greater opportunity for insight on the part of the companion and pilgrim. Maslow suggests that physiological needs related to emotional and physical survival are foundational and basic. Once met, these become resources, perhaps opening the possibility or awareness of other kinds of needs, like needs for safety, love and belonging needs, esteem, and self-actualization. The ebb and flow of life is filled with experiences involving the meeting and resurfacing of needs, perhaps suggesting that something is at work within our interior lives which determines how much “meeting of a need” is enough for motivation to kick in toward interest in other issues.

Maslow’s pyramid is easily visualized mentally and therefore extremely portable while companioning in context. This allows the companion to draw upon his concepts around the relationship of human needs, beginning with foundational physiological needs, opening up motivation for meeting safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization needs. Maslow appreciated the mental health of clients, wanting to know more about how humans make meaning, and aspire to reach their potential. Maslow’s positive psychology is very practical, common sense really in describing how the human capacity for maturing and fully becoming ourselves may be propelled through a foundation of good physical condition, nutrition and safety. Without a generalized experience of security in basic survival needs, our
energy becomes focused on the meeting of those needs on a daily basis. This leaves little time or energy for relationship or aspiration. This understanding of human motivation is a powerful awareness that can help in the design of supports and experiences to foster positive growth for those in need of advantage. These may be for some, an experience of the incarnation in the becoming of fully a person in any given moment (Morgan J. H., 2010).

In my work with chronically homeless men, I have had the privilege of walking with one particular community for about 5 years. I first met some of the men while they were living on the street, seeing them only occasionally. Then, one winter, a church basement opened up a space for about 25 selected men as a winter shelter. Bit by bit, the men settled in, knowing their routines and having a place to store their belongings. They looked healthier and some began to look for day labor. The next winter, a new residence opened. Some of this same group became tenants in a program called “Housing First”. Each would have a small studio apartment, participate in support meetings, and follow a behavioral code. Sobriety was not a requirement for shelter. Harm reduction was a program goal. The journey has not been completely smooth, requiring careful, faithful work around behavioral expectations. Some of the men had great difficulty making the transition from living outside, to being inside. Not everyone was able to move to readiness for engagement with personal and program goals. Over time, the overall health for many improved in visible ways, and some of the hyper vigilance calmed. The place became more home than program. Although the negative aspects of addiction are still operational and shadows sometimes undo progress, there are also glimmers of spiritual growth. Sometimes, this community gives back through neighborhood volunteerism. For those interested and feeling ready, there is a bi weekly spirituality group initiated through the tenant’s council. Over time, observation suggests that the deepening sense of home and community may foster personal and community growth in surprising and new ways. This growth can be considered as a process of “always seeking” rather than a process
of attainment of particular steps or sequence. Companions and staff roles may include an aspect of coaching to guide another in noticing within themselves experiences of being stuck or in pain (Broder-Oldach, 2010).

As with other theorists engaged in positive psychology, Carl Rogers significantly contributes relationship building tools for the context of short term, even single encounters of companioning with people struggling with issues of addiction, deep poverty, mental illness and abuse. His emphasis on present and future focus of therapeutics compliments nicely spiritual companioning approaches involving mindfulness, a very present minded practice. His emphasis on client centeredness emphasizes the strength of the other, partnering nicely with the respect of pilgrim directed spiritual companioning. Accepting the internal frame of reference of another, while communicating empathy and understanding are central to Rogers thinking found equivalently within the journey of spiritual companioning modeled in chaplaincy as a non-anxious presence bringing hope and acceptance to another (Chaplaincy, 2014) (Rogers, On Becoming a Person, 1961). Simply stated, the holding of the client in positive regard translates on the street to the word “respect”. That simple concept is crucial to engagement of relationship, and at times, critical to the maintenance of holistic safety of relational parties as they face negative life forces including substances, mental illness and violence in contextual situations.

Deep respect for human dignity and human potential are fundamental to the helping relationship. The work of Harry Stack Sullivan connects the dots bringing theory together with modern concepts of mental illness. With his interest in the schizophrenic, the concepts of Harry Stack Sullivan open understanding of common psychiatric issues, affecting large numbers of people who are homeless and in poverty. Although Sullivan’s medical training was without psychiatry of any consequence, he gleaned expertise in his work with schizophrenics, using his experiences and observations to propose interpersonal relations as a treatment for the social anxiety he
observed in the patients. Seeing depression as a response to adverse events and loss, Sullivan takes an approach that is humanizing of the mental ill and normalizing of companioning with therapy as pathways to wholeness. Schizophrenia is an illness that can present to others with confusing and frightening behavior. Sullivan’s thoughts about the role of anxiety and the companioning intervention of human relationship are very compassionate and born out anecdotally in the experience of families and caregivers of those who suffer (Chaplaincy, 2014) (Rennebaum, 2008). Today trusting relationships paired with pharmaceuticals build upon Sullivan’s work, providing comfort and care to those having mental illness. Sullivan’s participant observer style of therapy is easily modified into a companioning style of contextual ministry, where the mindfulness of the companion are present to the behavior and emotion of the pilgrim, while also attending mindfully to the context.

In a composite example drawn from my own street ministry, (Broder-Oldach, 2010) a chaplain begins simply, in walking prayerfully around an intersection, observing carefully groups of people clustered on street corners, then noticing the distress of one particular person sitting at a bus stop. Drawing up closer, the chaplain takes care to watch, and does notice the woman wearing pajamas on a cold day. She seems to be yelling into the air, but in fact is bantering with a group of men, who are increasing in irritation with her. The woman is familiar to the chaplain, though not well known. Approaching her, the chaplain is friendly and draws attention to a recent friendly encounter in a community meal. She highlights connection with that location, and names some names of helping people beloved and trusted in the community. The pilgrim engages the chaplain, who then reaches deeper in to what may be going on today. The woman turns her attention away from the men, and engages in a conversation about her children, revealing their needs and engaging some help. The experience has moved the relationship a bit deeper. The encounter has been accepting, showing interest and caring. The encounter ends as a city bus approaches and the pilgrim
boards the bus with some snacks for her children and a pair of gloves. This is in keeping with Sullivan’s therapeutic style, creating a warm environment and engaging the client while also maintaining personal boundaries. An accepting relationship is cultivated, and while the companion is not a personal friend, there is a sense of Anam Cara, soul friendship within this contextual ministry (O'Donohue, 1998).

Harry Stack Sullivan contributes further to our hope for better days when dealing with chronic mental illness. The client is helped to become aware of dysfunction in relationships and interactions as a way for creating new means of coping and living. Sullivan’s considerations include understanding life context and personality. His awareness of the role of social and cultural forces influencing mental health led him to draw upon social psychology and behavioral science as sources of help. Sullivan’s practices in exploring the familial, social and cultural contexts and influences with the patient are major contributions to the field of psychiatry. I certainly consider these attitudes as advances which reduce the stigma of mental illness by acknowledging the broad factors which can move a person from health to illness. His relational approach in working with patients honors the personal approach that has been a mark of what it means to be a physician. Sullivan’s view that we exist in relationship to other people points to the necessity for human engagement as part of any return to health and wholeness. His approach integrates very well within street ministry, where chaplains and companions go out to meet people who are homeless and mentally ill in a spirit of friendship and compassion (Broder-Oladi, 2010) (Chaplaincy, 2014) (Chapman A., 1976) (Cohen, 1990) (Rennebaum, 2008).

One particular voice stands out as completely relevant and applicable in the challenging contexts where contextual chaplaincy and companioning take place. In the alleys and streetscapes, under bridges, in the grocery line, at hospital bedsides, in the places where the church is living outside the walls, the voice of Viktor Frankl provides core theory and practices completely relevant for ministry among those who are suffering in any particular circumstance. Such
ministry contexts practiced mindfully, equipped with tools from spirituality and psychotherapy, all need to be deeply grounded and faithful. Frankl models the living and walking in the trenches of life. As a theorist and practitioner, Frankl provides important foundation and basis for psychological intervention, treatment in partnership with spiritual/human companioning drawing from his learning during the most inhumane of experiences, the Holocaust. Yet, his grounding is in the present moment, with an eye for a life that goes forward into the future. This attitude mirrors thinking in twelve step programs, where awareness of past influences is needed for movement into living one day at a time, the present day (Wilson, 1950). Frankl’s honoring of the present moment with the meaning unfolding, his logo therapy, is at home in the toolbox for contextual ministry and spiritual companioning. As Dr. John Morgan has described, “logo therapy explains our purpose in life not merely the seeking of pleasure but the embracing life with courage and responsibility to convert meaningless pain and suffering into purposeful direction.” This is in keeping with Frankl’s own words, “What matters is not the meaning of life in general, but rather the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment.” This statement seems true in reflecting upon ministry at the bedside of those approaching end of life or dealing with physical, spiritual, or emotional suffering. In the field, ministers may suggest that presence can be enough. Certainly it is a necessary foundation, sometimes enough on its own. Still, ministry stirs us to want to create meaning and be present, hopefully soothing suffering when faced with another soul in distress. Applications for logo therapy theory in triage, crisis, short and long-term spiritual care have the capacity to offer caring touch in the presence of deep suffering. This may be experienced as privilege and gift to both client and minister, for presence in the face of suffering can be a suffering in itself. In logo therapy, the intentionality of choice and action, with the mindfulness of both bringing and accepting even momentary meaning provides a true parallel process of making meaning for the client, the caregiver within the duo they form in their shared experiences. Within the
making of meaning, per Frankl, may be experiences of spirituality including awe, wonder, gratitude, and sense of beauty. As I reflect upon the community of homeless I know, affected profoundly by addictions and poverty, such therapeutic support could provide both comfort and support for growth beyond the grip of addiction, into spiritual living. Addictions, by their very nature, are habitual activities keeping a distance between our spirits and our truth. Denial shields the inner spirit from facing the truth, and there is suffering. The infusion of reflection, mindfulness and exploration of past experiences of meaning can at times, be therapeutic, and even invitational into a deeper soul journey. Among the chronically homeless and alcoholic, hard living leads to a time when physical health can no longer be retrieved. These are deeply human situations. The making of momentary meaning may offer the possibility for healing in spirit and mind when the body can no longer recover. The expression may be one day at a time, but life unfolds in a series of moments. Moments when suffering is relieved, beloved memory restored, and sobriety maintained give example to meaningful, soulful experiences of being truly alive. The possibility of healing moments makes logo therapeutic conversation something to be welcomed within contextual ministering and spiritual accompaniment (Frankl, 1959) (James, William, & Chadwick, 1980) (Wilson, 1950) (Yaniger, 2011).

In acute care settings and nursing homes, the question of meaning and purpose surfaces frequently in the care of patients and families, within the staff providing care, and also within the institutional structures now in a period of tremendous shifting of culture and practice. Frankl’s perspective suggests that an experience of momentary meaning is therapeutic, freeing and soothing. For those with dementia, re-experiencing a positive past memory may bring momentary relief from an estrangement, or remembrance of grief or joy. Community rituals are another example of logo therapeutics offering opportunities for people holding a common experience to explore and express, making meaning of shared experiences. The
use of imagination allows us to reflect from different angles of a situation, until a perspective feels authentic and real. Frankl recounts this strategy as self-preserving in the face of the horror of the holocaust. Interventions like these examples may also offer a secondary consequence in giving comfort and empowerment to caregivers and companions experiencing a high exposure to suffering. Frankl proposes, and models with his own experience how life experiences of meaning and met need can be drawn upon in difficult times to remind us of our inner strength and purpose. For those who have experienced abuse or addiction issues in childhood, unfortunate assumptions may inform and distort the development of meaningful personal narrative. This reality may distinguish when a relationship may benefit by the addition of therapeutic care. When life experiences of meaning are embedded in a life narrative having meaning and purpose, the possibility of transcending what has happened exists. In the vacuum of life without meaning, addiction and despair are ready to fill the space. Within the safety of life giving relationships comes the capacity to view the darkness and understand that there is more to the dignity of personhood than despair. Viktor Frankl survived and thrived following an experience of profound human darkness, the Holocaust. In these simple statements, he shines a brilliant light upon what it means to be fully human in any given moment.

“We cannot forget pain, but we can use it in service to others.”
“Meaning can be found in the stand we take with our suffering.”
“When people have a vision for life, survival is possible.”
“The last of the human freedoms is to choose your attitude in any situation.” (Frankl, 1959)

Any experience of one helping another begins with compassion. Compassion allows a companion to travel with a pilgrim on a journey
of the spirit. Sometimes, that journey is a therapeutic one. Another time, it might be about soul friendship. Another time, it might be about service to others. When specific emotional and spiritual help needs to be part of the journey, specific aspects of the classic schools of psychotherapy can be found in a lightweight spiritual care toolbox for spiritual companions and chaplains ministering in context. Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh advises the companion and pilgrim in all of us:

Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world... Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including personal contact, and visits, images, sounds. By such means...awaken yourselves and others to the reality of suffering in the world. If we get in touch with the suffering of the world, and are moved by that suffering, we may come forward to help the people who are suffering.

Such is the healing purpose and journey intended in the practice of psychotherapy, in the ministry of chaplaincy and the journey of spiritual accompaniment (Goodreads, 2014).

References


Catholic Priests and Their People
Changing Dynamics

David B. Couturier, OFM. Cap.

A review of the history of Roman Catholic priests and their people in America reminds us that the relationship priests have with their people has never been simple, uncomplicated, or stress-free. The historian James M. O’Toole recently catalogued six generations of Catholics and came to the conclusion that “American Catholics have been changing from the very beginning. Their experience has been varied, not uniform or monolithic. No one experience has been more authentic or defining than all others” (O’Toole, 2008, p. 3). Whether it was the so-called “priestless church,” with its few circuit riding priests, at the time of the American Revolution, or the volatile period of “trusteeism” in the 19th century, priests and their people were from the beginning grappling, debating, and sometimes even brawling over what it means to be a hierarchical community in a democratic republic.

Priests and people contended heatedly over their high expectations of one another. They argued about their roles and the boundaries of each other’s authority. Neither group was trying to break the bond they had with one another. They were simply trying to get the rules of their relationship straight “in a country founded on the idea that the people had the right, given them directly by God, to form their own government and to have charge of their own affairs” (O’Toole, 2008, p. 49).
Vatican II, for its part, taught that the relationship between priest and people was to be defined by mutual service, by love and not power and properly engaged in by dialogue, mutual sharing and common effort (Vatican, 1964, ¶ 13). The Jesuit historian John Padberg reminds us that the priest-people relationship was illuminated at Vatican II with ten revolutionary words: (1) Collegiality; (2) Aggiornamento; (3) Dialogue; (4) The People of God; (5) Inculturation; (6) Liturgy; (7) Religious Liberty; (8) *Gaudium et Spes*; (9) Ecumenism; (10) Revelation (Padberg, 1990, pp. 17-19).

Truth be told -- there has never been a golden age of unrestricted mutual respect between priests and people or a time of wholesale suspicion, either. Instead, priests and people have been involved in an urgent dance, where each partner sometimes leads and sometimes follows according to perceived proper roles and pastoral exigencies, often stubbing toes and bruising egos along the way. Priests and their people have been learning from and correcting one another every step of the way, as they respond to the ever changing complexities of Gospel life in modern times.

**Changes in the Relationship between Priests and People**

So, how is the relationship changing now? First, for Catholics who go to church regularly, the priest’s relationship with them is relatively strong. By and large, priests have their people’s loyalty and enjoy their respect. Priests have earned this respect by satisfying parishioners’ basic pastoral needs – providing the Eucharist in ways that people can actively participate and learning how to preach biblically-based homilies that explain and apply God’s Word to real life issues and problems. Priests continue to visit the sick and offer comfort to the dying, even as the complications of our nation’s health care system become more pronounced. Priests have re-organized pastoral staffs and councils with a more clearly articulated sense of mission, along with a greater spirit of collaboration and accountability to the lay faithful.
It must also be said that through the whole tragedy that is the sexual abuse scandal, people have gone to their local priests for explanation, consolation and reform. Pastors would not have been able to steer their parishes safely through the turbulence of the past decade, if they had not been skilled pastoral leaders, ready to listen patiently and sensitively to the legitimate anger and disgust that erupted. Parish priests and, one might add, women religious deserve credit for keeping the American Catholic Church steady through an incredibly difficult time.

Thus, for those who come to Church regularly, the pastoral relationship between priests and people is relatively strong. However, signs on the horizon provide warnings and signal the need for immediate attention.

Demographics indicate that the vast majority of Catholics in the United States has increasingly little contact with a priest. For the majority of Catholics, priests are neither a significant nor even an occasional force in their lives, if regular attendance at Mass is even the modest baseline of a pastoral relationship. To this point, the average weekly attendance at Mass across the country now stands at approximately 24% (The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, CARA, 2012). But, rates in some dioceses continue to track much lower. In the Archdiocese of Boston, for example, weekly attendance has dropped to about 15% (Couturier, 2011b). Not so many years ago, the Archdiocese boasted rates in the 60 and 70% range.

When we look at the generations attending Mass on a weekly or even a monthly basis, we see progressive erosion (CARA, 2012). Among Catholics seventy years or older, 64% go at least once a month and 45% go once a week. For Catholics between the ages of 52 and 69, attendance at Mass stands at 24%. Among Catholics between the ages of 31 and 51, 15% go to Mass on a weekly basis. For those between 18 and 30, that number stands at 18%. Research demonstrates that young adult Catholics do not see or experience a priest on a weekly or monthly basis.
Stated bluntly, we can now say that the vast majority of Catholics in America has no relationship and little contact with a priest. Priests no longer say Mass for them and no longer preach to them. Priests are no longer their confessors, spiritual directors or pastoral counselors. Priests are no longer their teachers of the faith or guides on the spiritual journey. Priests rarely marry them. In some dioceses, the rate of Catholic weddings has dropped 75% in the last 15-20 years (Couturier, 2011b).

Why the Fracture in the Priest and People Relationship

Among some commentators on Catholic life, there is a growing chorus who believe that the crisis of Catholicism today revolves around ideology and identity (Sirico, 2009). Briefly stated, Catholics don’t know who they are because they don’t know what they believe, and, because of this, they don’t know how to act as Catholics in the 21st century.

I question this premise. I believe that the problem is the result of a growing “lack of fit” between what Catholics need from their parish experience and what they expect to get. There was a time when expectation and experience were more closely aligned and Catholics felt what researchers refer to as an experience of ‘religious well-being’ (Bufford, Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991, pp. 56-70). However, for more than forty years now, there has been a growing disconnection developing between priests and people over what are considered legitimate pastoral needs and it is that which may be causing the severe strain between priests and the majority of Catholics in America.

Today Catholics are trying to do what they have always done – negotiate love and family, jobs and careers, sickness and health, greed and generosity. But, they do so in a vastly different context. Catholics are changing along with the church institutions on which they have depended (Couturier, 2011c). The question we must ask is whether
Catholics and their institutions are changing in the same direction, with the same vision and toward similar ends.

When our Catholic ancestors came to this country (largely) as immigrants, they did so with a twofold purpose: to defend the faith in an alien land and to move a generation of Catholics up and out of disadvantage as quickly as possible. The Church erected powerful institutions to accomplish those twin tasks. It built strong neighborhood churches and the largest and most successful private school network the world had ever known. It created a vast complex of hospitals, orphanages and charitable associations. It built the pastoral institutions needed by the people of the time with a united mission and a cohesive sense of purpose.

If Catholics demonstrated a cooperative relationship with the clergy back then, it was because parishioners felt they could call on priests to provide them with the skills, virtues and institutions they needed to live as good Catholics and authentic Americans. Catholics trusted that priests and religious understood the times in which they lived and had intelligent and practical pastoral tools with which to engage them. Religion wasn’t simply a matter of polemics. The Church was concretely present and institutionally helpful when young people were making their decisions on what career or vocation to pursue, who and when to marry, and how to raise a family (Wuthnow, 2007).

**Priests and a New Relationship with Young Adults**

Things have changed dramatically in the pastoral relationship priests and ministers have with the new generation of emerging adults, 50.7% of the adult population today (Smith & Snell, 2009). It is my contention that young adults just don’t see or experience priests in their lives; they can’t feel their pastoral care through the fog of consumerism that envelops them in the day to day. Without dialogue and significant interaction, priests have yet to understand the issues that concern young people today. Because of this, priests have not
been able to translate those concerns into institutions that are helpful to a new generation of Catholics.

Young Catholics have new challenges in front of them, tasks that have to do with two overwhelming realities: the reinvention of work in a global world and the untested rules governing the “new economy” (Couturier, 1998, pp. 22-35).

To have a relationship with young adults today starts with understanding that the landscape of their lives is being re-arranged by unprecedented economic forces. America has already moved from a largely relational culture that once placed a priority on family and faith to a new global work culture that places a high priority and exacts a heavy price on one’s work and career above all else (Couturier, 2007, pp. 79-87).

Young people are watching as old economic rules are being reworked for the benefit of a shrinking minority of Americans. They are living with increasing obligations, dwindling benefits and fewer guarantees. A college education is no longer a sure bet for employment in America. Research done at Georgetown University recently asked Millennials what their greatest concerns were. Seventy-six percent (76%) of them said unemployment and finding a job. Their second greatest concern mentioned future economic problems, viz., addressing the federal deficit (Jones, Cox & Banchoff, 2012, p.1). With jobs becoming more of a gamble, young people are delaying decisions about love, marriage, family, and settling down well into their thirties. The turbulence of the modern economy makes marriage less attractive and more vulnerable, especially and surprisingly in the conservative heartland of America (Wilcox, 2010, pp. 13-61; Wuthnow, 2007, p. xvi).

The sad fact is that most of the important decisions of young Catholics, those about sexuality, marriage, friends, careers and children, are happening out of the reach of our congregations. Our institutions of support no longer match up to the tasks and needs of young adults. With inconsistent support from traditional institutions, this generation is devising a more “improvisational” style of religious
and social engagement, in almost everything it does (Wuthnow, 2007, p. xvi). These young adults have demonstrated that they are not interested in the polarizing debates that occupy the minds and pulpits of previous generations.

Let me put our ecclesial dilemma in a succinct form. When a previous generation needed to defend the faith and asked for an education to lift its generation out of disadvantage as quickly as possible, the Church provided first rate schools and universities all across this country. And, when America had few social safety nets for the poor, priests and religious built the largest and most effective private network of hospitals, orphanages, and charitable institutions the world had ever known. The obvious question is:

And when two successive generations of younger, post-boomer Catholics ask about jobs, unemployment, the state of the economy, and how they’re going to make it with the burden of debt they are likely to inherit as a result of the unfunded military and social liabilities we have accumulated and the tax cuts we have endorsed, what has been the response of our dioceses and our parishes?

The wholesale migration from a largely relational to a new global work culture exacts a heavy toll on young people. It subordinates all commitments to the totalizing demands of profit at all costs. It is a devastating spiritual crisis in the West, transposing the desire for the infinity of God into a desire for the infinity of goods and robbing us of our ability to form secure and lasting relationships, especially with those in need (Couturier, 2007).

The problem remains that the Church doesn’t yet have a language or a practice at the local level that addresses the economic trauma young people around the world are facing. Therefore, the pastoral relationship with young adults may hinge on the willingness to stop imposing identity and ideology questions on them and priests’ ability to listen attentively and intelligently to the difficult questions young people are asking, translating those (economic) concerns and fears into a new and credible desire for God.
Priests and their Relationship with Women

The first thing to be said is that the working relationship between priests and women has been among the most solid, satisfying and effective priests have. One of the tangible benefits of the post-Vatican II era has been the introduction of competent, caring, educated and spiritual women to pastoral staffs. They have provided insight, intelligence, creativity, compassion and a distinct attunement to the daily rhythms of family and community life that can often get lost in the single-sex atmosphere of a rectory. When scandals arose and parish structures were reconfigured, women pastoral associates and lay ecclesial ministers were the sturdy wisdom figures and reliable pastoral partners pastors could rely on. But, there is a generational shift among Catholic women already underway, which we ignore to our peril.

Research across denominations indicates that we have two generations (Generation X’ers and Millennials), people 17-50 years of age, who are not only less “devout” than their elders, but show what sociologist Patricia Wittberg calls a “benign neglect” of religion that leaves them sometimes curious about faith but “not yet interested enough to be drawn back to the Church” (Wittberg, 2012).

Wittberg’s research uncovers especially ominous results when studying women below the age of 50. While both genders are far less devout than their elders, she finds that younger women born between 1981 and 1995 are less likely ever to attend Mass and more likely to hold heterodox positions than men their own age, the first generation of Catholic women to do so (Wittberg, 2012).

We know that up until now women have been more likely to be involved in church life, to be more orthodox in their beliefs and more devoted to the practice of the faith. In study after study, U.S. women were more likely to identify themselves as being “very spiritual,” having read the Scriptures and having had an experience of God (Wittberg, 2012). Women have always exhibited a greater
commitment to and involvement with religion (Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 26).

The fact that women between the ages of 17 and 50 are now more alienated from religion and its institutions, for the first time in history, is troubling. On the whole, women have been the church’s strongest parishioners and most dependable pastoral workers. If this process of feminine alienation continues or even accelerates, Wittberg reminds us, we may likely witness an exponential diminishment in church practice for generations to come.

Young women are eager for enduring signs that their voices are being heard and their concerns are being treated with dignity and respect. Women today are leaders in their families, businesses and civic communities. We need to realize that they will not cross the threshold of our parishes if they are treated with any subtext of inferiority or invisibility. Therefore, parish initiatives have to be recalibrated specifically and intelligently to the pastoral concerns of women all along the developmental scale of women’s lives.

Priests and their People in Multiple Parish Pastoring Setting

Dioceses across America are in the process of a massive reorganization of basic parish structures. Thousands of parishes are being clustered, merged, and realigned. Facing a severe vocation shortage and unfunded liabilities for church maintenance, the Archdiocese of Boston, for example, has already determined that its future is in “multiple parish pastoring.” From now on, priests will be pastors of two, three or four (separate) parishes simultaneously. To my knowledge, Boston is the first (arch)diocese in the country to make multiple parish pastoring normative. It signals that the American Catholic Church is entering an entirely new phase, making its parishes more regional than local and demanding a whole new level of collaboration and accountability across parish boundaries. Is it prepared?
Multiple parish pastoring is neither a simple nor an uncomplicated solution. In some places, multiple parish pastoring has been introduced as a purely organizational or structural adjustment, using the prevailing corporate mentality of “doing more with less.” In the corporate world, this makes sense when markets are ripe and the demand for product remains high. Streamlining efficiencies works when people are willing to sacrifice a bit of relationship to get something they want in a timely manner. But, the Catholic Church in America is not at that point. The demand for religion is extremely low and getting lower, especially among young adults. What they need is a pastoral relationship calibrated to their real issues. Structural alignments and corporate efficiencies alone will not address those concerns.

Multiple parish pastoring adds a new layer of complexity and stress to the pastoral relationship priests have with their people. Already we know that pastoring multiple parishes is not simply a matter of multiplication, i.e. doing the same things times two or three. Oftentimes, it is a matter of properly engaging multiple religious cultures simultaneously, even though there are few models of this dynamic even in the for-profit literature. We know from the research conducted by the Rev. James Burns that a significant portion of the clergy is already experiencing stress levels in ministry reaching a designation of post-traumatic stress disorder (Burns, 2008; Burns, 2010). To be effective, bishops, priests and parishioners must engage the emotional and social dynamics of multiple parish pastoring, at both the conscious and unconscious levels. Implementing such a dramatic new form of governance without a substantial re-education effort would be foolhardy. The fact is that few seminaries are actively preparing men for these multiple-parish pastoring situations.

**Significant Challenges in the Priest-People Relationship**

Vatican II was a pastoral council that modified the priest-people relationship with new insights and methodologies of what constitutes
“the pastoral” (Bushman, 2011). Those new methodologies included dialogue, collegiality, collaboration and communion (Quenum, 2012, pp. 542-551). The pastoral relationship between priests and people today is challenged in three significant ways:

1. The work of priests is being reinvented by a global work culture that imposes new and more stringent performance standards regarding accountability, competency and transparency (Couturier, 1998). In the popular perception, the status of priesthood is viewed less relationally and more in functional terms.

2. As dioceses reconfigure to multiple parish pastoring, priests find themselves more isolated from other priests at work and less available to laity and other priests for ordinary social interaction. Priests are more likely to live alone and, given the more complex work environment they find themselves in, are less likely to seek one another out for support and relaxation.

3. Polarization intensifies as priests and people emerge from conflicting “cultures of Catholic living.” Priests and parishioners are more likely to interpret each other’s behaviors according to the scripts and norms of their inherited “culture of formation” leading to fundamental clashes of meaning and growing levels of conflict (Couturier, 2011, pp. 75-88).

**Recommendations**

1. The people of God want both holiness and wholeness from priests. They want priests who can share their personal experience of Christ in mature ways. They do not expect perfection (and never have), but they do demand a greater level of integrity in priests’ emotional and spiritual lives, along with excellence in preaching and administration. Priests, therefore, must rise to the higher standards of ethics, accountability, collaboration, mutual respect and transparency
that American Catholics expect. This means that priests must root out every vestige of clericalism in their dealings with the people of God and re-orient themselves daily to a direct and humble relationship with Christ (Wilson, 2008). Priests need to develop a more mature male spirituality and a contemplative practice that bears witness joyfully and enthusiastically to the Christ who, in this and every chaos, makes all things new. The presbyterate needs a new infusion of intentionality (Knott, 201, pp. xi-xx).

2. Priests and people are entering a “new normal” that will be characterized by a discomforting sense of urgency, high stakes and uncertainty (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009, p.1). We need a priest-people relationship that copes maturely with these anxieties. Moreover, we need to find a realistic image of the “priest-people” relationship that is neither overly optimistic nor severely pessimistic. Current images are troubling. One scholar suggests that priests have to become like “hospice workers,” because parts of the Church are dying and he reasons that the most authentic thing we can do is to help the church die gracefully (Massingale, 2004). Another priest suggested that Catholics must “rage” with prophetic impatience until the Church withdraws from its addiction to power (Crosby, 2011). Perhaps the Patristic Trinitarian image of “perichoresis” might serve as an alternative. I would suggest that priests must learn how to dance with the saints—mutually leading, following, lifting and falling, listening to the suggestive rhythms of God’s Spirit, going where the passion of the Christ leads us. This is not a time for begging questions or faking final answers. This is a time for priests to re-engage their relationship with the Body of Christ at a deeper level, telling the whole truth and helping everyone listen to each other as faithful adults, engaging and attending to the diverse members of Christ’s Body with a renewed vigor and a more profound courage.
3. One of the areas that trips priests up in their relations with people is at the level of unconscious expectations. The fact is that congregations get anxious and do so in predictable ways. As I have written elsewhere, all institutions experience some type of social anxiety that is primed by threats to the group’s emotional needs for survival, competition, competency, intimacy, generativity and creativity (Couturier, 2008, pp. 177-180). All organizations face uncertainty as they try to accomplish difficult tasks in the world. Churches are no different. However, many parishes do not know how to contain normal anxiety, transform group conflict or channel fear in turbulent times in ways that are productive and consistent with Gospel mission (Nobel & Noble, 2008). It is a new skill that parish leaders need to learn.

4. We must introduce new efficiencies into our pastoral administration of parishes (and teach them in our seminaries) for one reason only, i.e. so that churches will have the energy, resources and pastoral imagination needed to initiate a powerful new evangelization, especially of young adults. We need a wholesale new auditing of all our welcoming behaviors. Because we have always presumed attendance at church, we have never before had to audit the ways we keep people away. We must adopt new methodologies of “deep listening” for the particular concerns of young adults who have been traumatized by unstable relationships, unreliable institutions and an economic philosophy of life that deprives them of their deepest hopes and desires. One concrete way of breaking through the bureaucracies is for every parish to institute the newly-established fifty-five “standards of excellence” developed for American Catholic institutions (National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, 2013).

5. Priests and people need to re-think how they serve those who have “left the Church.” Their number is not insignificant. It is estimated that about 10% of the general population in the United
States is formerly Catholic (Hornbeck, 2011, pp. 1-29). It is too easy to label these individuals in negative terms and dismiss them. But, the fact is that we know so little about the process of “de-conversion” from the Catholic Church. Perhaps if we understood the distinct phases involved in the painful process of disaffiliation, we might actually intervene earlier and with more sympathy than previously (Beaudoin, 2011, pp. 22-37).

6. Priests must engage women, especially young women, in a whole new way. Priests cannot impose questions and solutions on them. They must learn how to enter a deep dialogue with women about women’s pastoral needs as women experience them, a process that is neither automatic nor easy. The results are not predictable or foregone conclusions. These activities should result in new social habits with religious symbols that can foster for women (and priests) a more intense and satisfying relationship with Christ and the Church. The first principle for these engagements must be that deep dialogue is transformative for all involved.

Conclusion

The relationship between priests and people continues to evolve. For those going to Church on a regular basis, they still encounter priests as dedicated, talented, committed and experienced men with a high morale and a deep love and satisfaction for hands-on ministry with the People of God. But, there are far too many Catholics now who do not know priests and don’t know Christ through them.

While priests and people share the same faith, they seem to be working out their concerns in different worlds with vastly different assumptions about what is pastorally important. Thus, a new dialogue and mutual respect are critical for any rapprochement between priests and the majority of Catholics who no longer attend Mass on a regular basis.
References


Logotherapy & Existential Analysis
A Meaning-Centered and Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy

*(applicable across clinical settings)*

Marie S. Dezelic

Viktor E. Frankl’s *Logotherapy & Existential Analysis* is a Meaning-Centered and Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapeutic approach. It is applicable for clinicians who provide psychotherapy for diverse populations: individuals, couples, families, group settings, and pastoral counseling, addressing the needs of varied psychiatric diagnoses, as well as everyday psychosocial-spiritual and existential issues. *One cannot remove the human experience from a human being, nor dismiss the unique essence of each individual.* Consequently, regardless of the theoretical approach one utilizes, or the particular techniques one finds necessary for dealing with specific diagnoses, a therapy addressing existential concerns will be appropriate in most cases. Viktor Frankl revolutionized psychotherapy by addressing the *spiritual component of the human being’s existence*—one’s unique essence. Logotherapy & Existential Analysis can provide clinicians with a theoretical base and practical therapeutic techniques to guide patients toward *meaningful and purposeful living!* It is a *specific* as well as an *adjunctive therapy*; “*Logotherapy is not ‘only open toward cooperation with other schools,’ but also its combination with other techniques should be encouraged and welcomed*” (Frankl, 1988, p.164).
I. Overview of Logotherapy & Existential Analysis

What is Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapy?

“Man is not he who poses the question, What is the meaning of life? but he who is asked this question, for it is life itself that poses it to him” (Frankl, 2000, p.29).

Viktor E. Frankl’s Logotherapy & Existential Analysis, what is also known as Franklian Psychology, is a philosophical, anthropological, and phenomenological approach to an understanding of the human being. Viktor Frankl, (1905-1997), born in Vienna, Austria, was a neurologist and psychiatrist by profession who earned his M.D. and Ph.D. from the University of Vienna. Surviving four different Nazi concentration camps between 1942 and 1945, including Auschwitz, while his entire family perished, Frankl lived to write about his horrific experiences and why some individuals survived while others did not, through his theory and therapy of Meaning.

Frankl’s work is best known for addressing the existential themes of meaning, human freedom, responsibility, values, spirituality, and death, on which he founded what has become known as the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy (Frankl, 1986). Frankl’s Logotherapy, which followed in part and extended from his original Existential Analysis work, was precisely a novel therapeutic approach, one that was a philosophy of human existence, an anthropological theory of personality, and a therapy which addressed the question—What is the meaning of life, by being a Meaning-Centered psychotherapy. He used the Greek word “Logos” in the name of his theory because it denotes Meaning, and expressed that Logos is deeper than logic and explanation. Frankl attempted to convey to the world that Meaning opened an entirely new dimension, as if peering through the looking glass: looking through the Pathos—the pathology, into the Spirit—the unique essence of the human
being, to and into the Logos—the Meaning. He explained that Meaning in Life is the primary motivational force activated in one’s life, and that potential Meaning is inherent and dormant in every situation one faces in life.

Frankl posited that his theory was one that dealt specifically with the Will to Meaning, and could be used as a specific therapy in particular cases and as an adjunctive therapy in most cases. Frankl believed that the Will to Pleasure (Freud’s Psychoanalysis) and the Will to Power (Adler’s Individual Psychology) held an individual back from “being free” toward his Will to Meaning in life (Frankl, 1986). As Logotherapy’s primary focus is on the meaning of human existence and man’s search for meaning, “the patient is actually confronted with and reoriented toward the meaning of his life. And to make him aware of this meaning can contribute much to his ability to overcome his neurosis” (Frankl, 2006, p.98).

Philosophy of Logotherapy: The Basic Assumptions

The philosophy of Logotherapy carries with it the Basic Assumptions about the human being and its approach to understanding the human being’s existential qualities. Therapists can utilize the innate capacities of the human being—the Basic Assumptions, and the therapeutic encounter, to further foster these innate capacities, and to address the difficulties held within the Situations of Life, including emotions, cognitions and behaviors.

The Basic Assumptions in the philosophy of Logotherapy (Barnes, 2005, p.20-29):

- Defiant Power of the Human Spirit
- Uniqueness of the Individual
- Demand Quality of Life
- Capacity for Choice
- Freedom to Find Meaning or New Attitudes
• Responsibility to (Not from)
• Life has Meaning Under All Circumstances, Even the Most Miserable Ones
• Will to Meaning
• Importance of the Therapeutic Relationship
• Human Being is Comprised of Mind, Body and Spirit
• Spiritual Dimension is the Healthy Core
• Dignity of the Human Being

Frankl often quoted Nietzsche who said “He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how.” Logotherapy accomplishes its aims by assisting individuals to become aware of our spiritual readiness—that is, the capacity to transcend, held within our healthy spiritual core, make conscious these resources, and use the Defiant Power of the Human Spirit to stand up against adversity, trials and tribulations. Through these actions, we assist the patient to transform suffering into human achievement.

The 3 Primary Tenets of Logotherapy

The 3 Primary Tenets of Logotherapy are the central concepts on which the theory is based. Meaning, often taught by cultural values, societal descriptions, familial purposes, and shaped by experiences in the world, is entirely personal. Although human beings may have similar concepts, definitions and understandings, Meaning is by its fundamental nature and virtue, a unique, experiential, multi-dimensional, non-linear, abstract, and exclusively human concept.

The Three Tenets of Logotherapy (Rice et al., 2004, p.3):
• Freedom of Will: The freedom to take a stand toward conditions and change attitudes in the face of difficulties; not freedom from the conditions of life—situations happening to us and around us.
- **Will to Meaning**: The basic striving to find meaning and purpose; not as a drive or pursuit, but as a choice of direction.
- **Meaning of Life**: Meaning is always available for us to discover; we are free to search for and fulfill our unique meaning.

**The Situations of Life:**

- **Unique Conditions of Life**: All of the conditions one experiences in life, irrelevant of the choice or wanting from the individual.
- **Unavoidable Suffering**: The suffering one experiences when an unavoidable situation occurs outside of one’s direct control, (i.e. Nazi concentration camps, traumatic childhood events, rape, abuse,…).
- **Unfortunate Blows of Fate**: The unfortunate situations one finds oneself in, or has happened in life, (i.e. a tragic accident with damaging repercussions to self or loved ones, loss of job, loss of house, breakup of marriage/relationship, death of a loved one,…).

**The Human Being’s Multidimensional Aspects: Body (Soma), Mind (Psyche), & Spirit (Noös)**

Frankl used the term *Dimensional Ontology* to describe the inseparable dimensions of the human being: the *Soma*—Body, *Psyche*—Mind, and *Noös*—Spirit. We can visualize these areas as three separate yet interconnecting parts, each containing a specific area of our functioning. “Human spirit is not a substance, it is pure dynamic (dynamic=movement). Logotherapy would not say ‘Man has a spirit.’ Instead, man is spirit. We have a body (soma) and a mind (psyche), but we are a spirit” (Barnes, 2005, p.37). “‘Spirit’ (Geist) lacks religious overtones in Frankl’s original German usage. It simply refers to that dimension of the human person that is free,
responsible, and directed toward finding meaning” (Frankl, 2004, p.169).

Logotherapy states that in this particularly human dimension—the Nöetic (Spiritual) Dimension is where we have access to the resources of our healing and health.

Within our Nöetic (Spiritual) Dimension, we have the ability to access:

- **Choice:** Choosing to look at available options including modifying attitudes when options are limited.
- **Humor:** To access one’s innate sense of humor in any situation; the capability of distancing the self from the situation to be able to feel less disturbed and/or derive a delightful moment or pleasure.
- **Creativity:** To access one’s unique capabilities of being creative—original, inspired, imaginative, artistic, resourceful, ingenious, and innovative.
- **Conscience:** In Logotherapy, conscience is beyond the super-ego; it is the authentic valuation of ideals and values and how one chooses to actualize them, whether in thought or action.
- **Decision Making:** The ability and process by which one make’s a specific choice, even within limitations and constraints; to take a possible new action; to modify attitudes in dealing with a situation.
- **Taking a Stand Toward Somatic and Psychic Limitations:** Not allowing the limitations of body and/or mind to hinder one’s essence and very personhood; making choices where one still has the capability and capacity to do so.

In Logotherapy, therapists help orient the patients toward their innate Meaning, where they will then have the opportunity to reach:
Self-Transcendence of human existence—[which] denotes the fact that being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself—be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself… In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence (Frankl, 2006, p.110-111).

II. Applying Logotherapy & Existential Analysis in Clinical Settings

Role of the Logotherapist

“The physician should never be allowed to take over the patient’s responsibility; he must never permit that responsibility to be shifted to himself… He must be content with leading the patient to an experience in depth of his own responsibility” (Frankl, 1986, p.276).

The role of the Logotherapist is to be an interactive member of the therapeutic encounter. The therapist and patient, or therapist and group, are unique individuals; each will alter the encounter and leave an impact on the other. In this way, the Logotherapeutic encounter is a unique set of circumstances, and therefore requires the therapist to be completely present to the situation, and tailor the therapy to the patient. Consequently, Logotherapy becomes a uniquely designed experiential, existential (here-and-now) therapy, utilizing primary methodologies as well as many complementary methods.
Logotherapists:

- **Build Trust:** Trust is the initial building block to allow any meaningful therapeutic work to exist upon.

- **Uphold Ethical Standards:** Maintain and protect the mental health and well-being of patients at the forefront of all therapeutic interventions and encounters, including autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, and informed consent.

- **Prevention of Iatrogenic Damage:** Prevent damage resulting from a medical/psychological diagnosis or treatment interventions on the part of the therapist.

- **Medical Ministry:** Provide treatment to help patients become capable of enduring suffering that is necessitated by fate; i.e. when the patient has to face an inoperable disease or medical condition.

- **Use of the Therapeutic Relationship:** Use the therapeutic encounter to assist patients in their personal search for meaning and finding meaning potentials in life.

- **Humor:** Engage the ability of humor to distance patients from the situation, as well as within specific therapeutic methods—(i.e. Paradoxical Intention).

- **Human Dignity:** Always maintain the dignity of the human being, and one’s unique essence and presence in the world, regardless of the medical illness, psychological diagnosis, or noölogical (spiritual) frustration.

- **See the Individual as a Unique Being:** Treat each person as a unique being, and use wisdom in tailoring treatment according to the specific needs of the patient.

- **Activate Will to Meaning and Attitudinal Change:** Help patients uncover and activate their innate Will to Meaning and examine possible Attitudinal Change.
General Existential Analysis Exploration

Additionally, the aim of Logotherapy is to assist patients to become conscious to their responsibility to life, therefore seeking and creating their own meaningful existence. Through the explorations: on the meaning of life, on the meaning of death, on the meaning of suffering, on the meaning of love, and on the meaning of work (Frankl, 1986), patients become in touch with their own existence and meaning inherent within it.

- **On the Meaning of Life:** Exploring the search for Ultimate Meaning and Meaning in the Moment throughout one’s existence; experiencing meaning and purpose in one’s life which offers a reason for existence, leading to the feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction throughout the progression of life; and saying yes to life despite the inherent difficulties.

- **On the Meaning of Death:** In that death marks the end of our temporal existence, acknowledging this can activate one’s sense of meaning and purpose in life; creating a meaningful existence because of the transitoriness of life; realizing the opportunity to make a difference in one’s life and others’ within the limited time of one’s life span.

- **On the Meaning of Suffering:** Throughout life, one experiences suffering on a multitude of levels; it is how one responds to the suffering that ultimately impacts the suffering experienced in life; examining how suffering has influenced one’s existence and facilitated growth possibilities.

- **On the Meaning of Love:** The uniqueness of one person’s essence meets the uniqueness of another’s essence; it is at this spiritual level that one truly encounters another person and transcends beyond a purely physiological love, where one sees the potentials not yet realized and actualized in their beloved; experiencing meaning, purpose and self-transcendence through love and relationships with others.
• **On the Meaning of Work:** One’s work and profession can be what activates *meaning in life*; manifesting creative values and contribution to others through attitudes taken in work, and possibly through the specific type of work one does; finding *meaning and purpose* in life through giving of oneself in deed and action by self-transcending.

**Methodology—Primary Methods of Logotherapy** (Frankl, 1986; Frankl, 2004; Frankl, 2006; Graber, 2004; Marshall & Marshall, 2012)

• **Socratic (Maieutic) Dialogue:** A conversation that enables the birth of latent ideas, where the therapist acts as a “midwife,” assisting patients to give birth to new ideas; maieutic questioning awakens an innate knowledge into new attitudes, choices, and actions during the meaningful encounter.

  **Produces:** Therapeutic Encounter, Self-Transcendence, Activates Meaning, & Creativity

• **Paradoxical Intention:** Directing patients try to do, or wish to have happen, precisely what they fear; the effect is to disarm the anticipatory anxiety, which accounts for much of the feedback mechanism that initiates and perpetuates the neurotic condition.

  **Produces:** Self-Distancing, Self-Transcendence, & Humor

• **Dereflexion:** Used when a problem causes discomfort for patient, by too much reflection (*hyperreflection*), or by paying too much attention to solving the problem (*hyperintention*); consists of putting a stop on pathological *hyperreflection* and turning the mind to other thoughts or actions; reflecting away from oneself to another interest.

  **Produces:** Self-Distancing & Self-Transcendence
• **Medicine Chest:** Assisting patients to become aware of the tremendous and often untapped resources of health within their healthy core—the *Nöetic Dimension*—the spiritual dimension; activates will to find meaning, orientation toward goals, freedom to make decisions, creativity, imagination, and love beyond the physical.

  *Produces:* *Engage the Defiant Power of the Human Spirit*

**Method and Outcome of Treatment:**

• **Modification of Attitudes:** Facilitating and awakening attitudinal changes when patients are in despair or find themselves in a situation that cannot be changed, (i.e. unfortunate blows of fate, tragedies); each moment presents a unique opportunity in which patients can respond to and derive meaning.

  *Produces:* *Attitudinal Change, Meaning, & Self-Transcendence*

**Complementary Methods of Logotherapy**

• **Act As If:** Ask patients to act as if they have already accomplished their goal or achieved their meaningful task, and describe what it feels like to have done this.

• **Alternative Lists:** Making a list of desirable activities that would provide meaning, as well as alternative things patients can still do despite their current situation/diagnosis.

• **Appealing Technique:** Autogenic training combined with positive affirmations and guided imagery to strengthen the patient’s *Nöetic*—spiritual resources.

• **Art Therapy:** Ask patients to use art expression to allow for a meaningful experience; patients can give the art to someone significant as a gift, or keep as a legacy-building piece; can
be accomplished through writing, painting/drawing, photography, videography, or creating something unique such as a scrapbook, cookbook, photobook, knitting, etc.

- **Dream Analysis:** Identify dream content which is reflecting and giving a voice and vision to the patient’s unconscious—**Nöetic**—spiritual dimension.

- **Guided Fantasies/Imagery:** Take patients on a journey through guided fantasies and imagery toward achieving meaningful tasks; meditational and mindfulness based.

- **Identification with Objects:** Ask patients to bring or identify significant objects that they have collected in their life, and tell the story of the object; identify ways the patient can continue to use the object as a means of activating **will to meaning**.

- **Improvisations:** Improvising and individualizing techniques to focus on patients’ uniqueness and assist in activating their **Meaning Triangle**.

- **Journal Writing:** Ask patients to write about particular topics in order to look for meaningful cues.

- **Life Maps:** Ask patients to map out their past impactful experiences, positive and negative, through to the present day, and then map out where they would like to see themselves in the next year, 5, 10, 15 years.

- **List Making—(Good/Bad Consequences):** Patients make lists of good and bad consequences, as well as meaning interpretation of each.

- **Logoanalysis-7 Steps:** Treatment modality utilized in the treatment of addictions; The 7-step process consists of: (1) Identifying one’s belief system; (2) Experiencing loss of value; (3) Develop self-confidence through meditations, relaxation, exercise, and using the **Power of Freedom**; (4) Learn to cope with future problems; (5) Relationships are explored; (6) Derefection, the **MILE (Meaning in Life Evaluation Scale)** is administered; (7) Commitment to
working daily on activating their *will to meaning* to reinforce their uniqueness as human beings.

- **Logoanchor Technique**: Ask patients to refer to impactful experiences, events and images, that previously filled them with wonder and a sense of uniqueness, to be able to use these past meaningful moments as meaning-anchors for the present.

- **Logodrama**: Ask patients to think to a future time when they are close to death, and reflect back on their life on major accomplishments and meaningful moments, to ignite possible goals and plans.

- **Logohook**: Therapist takes a meaningful experience expressed or object the patient has shown, and uses it to activate and ignite meaning in the present moment.

- **Metaphors**: Use metaphors of ideas that interest patients, to connect them with meaningful concepts in their lives, and assist in imparting information to patients.

- **Mountain Range**: Ask patients to draw out their life as a mountain range, with significant people/situations who touched their lives being plotted on the peaks; meaningful individuals/ encounters can be discussed or written about.

- **Movie Experience**: (1) Life In Review, (2) Life in Preview, (3) Fast-Forward Experience; ask patients to describe their life in a three-part movie film production, depict which actors or historical/current figures would play them and other key members in the movie, describe the setting, the budget, and the story line in each of the three movie parts.

- **Positive Self-Talk**: Assist patients in strengthening and building internal resource development, accessing their Nöetic Dimension.

- **Sculpting**: Assist patients to sculpt, shape and adapt a story or experience into something that provides meaning, or extract meaning from it.
• **Stories/Parables:** Using stories/parables to impart information to patients in a meaningful way.

**Discovering Meaning in Life**

Frankl believed that meanings are unique, are always changing, but are never missing; life is never lacking a meaning (Frankl, 1978). Logotherapy consistently seeks to assist the patient in reorienting toward and activating *Meaning* in life. Patients can be taught the difference between *Meaning of the Moment*—which can be found and fulfilled, where patients have the opportunity to act with purposeful living, and to be aware of the meaning possibilities of each moment; and *Ultimate Meaning*—which can basically never be attained, but like the horizon, one can walk toward it, always seeing it in the near distance but never actually reaching it. Logotherapy posits that although we are always walking toward *Ultimate Meaning*,

Each person is a unique individual, going from birth to death through a string of unique life situations. Every situation, every unrepeatable moment, offers a specific meaning potential. To respond to these meaning offerings of the moment is to lead a meaningful life (Graber, 2004, p.87).

*The Meaning Triangle*, described by Frankl as the three areas where one has the capacity and opportunity to find meaning, includes Creativity, Experiences, and Attitudes.

**The Meaning Triangle** (Frankl, 2006):

• **Creativity:** The creative gifts one offers through one’s innate gifts and talents in work, deeds done, and goals achieved.
• **Experiences:** The experiences one engages in through encountering others in relationships of all kinds, and from nature, culture or religion.

• **Attitudes:** The attitudinal values one has realized by taking a stance toward a situation or circumstance, that was courageous or self-transcending.

Dr. Ann Graber’s *Reflections on the Meaning Triangle* depicted in her book: *Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapy: Method of Choice in Ecumenical Pastoral Psychology*, discusses how reflecting on these three areas keeps “with Logotherapy’s emphasis on ‘what’s right about you,’ and by deemphasizing ‘what’s wrong with you,’ [and] it can serve as a starting point for the therapeutic process” (Graber, 2004, p.195).

In Graber’s *Strengths Awareness Instrument*, she describes that each angle of *The Meaning Triangle* represents an avenue toward finding meaning:

1. “What I give to life through my **creativity**.
2. What I receive from life through **experiences**.
3. The stance I take toward life through my **attitude.**”

Included in this assessment tool, *Reflections* upon the following questions will aid in the *discovery of meaning* experienced during a previous time in life:

1. “What **creative** gifts have I offered to others through my talents, my work, deeds done, goals achieved that held meaning for me?
2. What **experiences** have I received from encountering others in relationship of all kinds, from nature, culture or religion that were deeply meaningful?
3. What **attitudinal** values have I realized by taking a stance toward situations or blows of fate that was courageous or self-transcending?” (Graber, 2004, p.94, Figure 6).
Tragic Optimism of Logotherapy: Optimism In The Face of Tragedy

Another more specific goal of Logotherapy is to contend with what Frankl calls “the case for Tragic Optimism” (Frankl, 2006, p.137). Specifically, to remain or become optimistic in the face of tragedy requires a modification of attitude, where one becomes optimistic or positive when it appears one could become discouraged or lose hope.

**Tragic Optimism** (Frankl, 2006, p.138):

- “Turning suffering into a human achievement and accomplishment.
- Deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better.
- Deriving from life’s transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action.”

Dr. Elisabeth Lukas describes four hints from Frankl’s *Medical Ministry*, which can assist in the process of attitude modification (Lukas, 2000, p.158-159):

2. Pointing Out Meaning.
4. Pointing Out Perspectives.”

It is the role of the Logotherapist to assist the patient in answering the question of how one can move beyond the suffering, guilt, and transitoriness of life, to derive meaning from the tragic situations of life and unfortunate blows of fate. The trajectory can ultimately be an upward and outward movement from life-limiting circumstances.
Challenges of Human Suffering: The Tragic Triad and The Neurotic Triad

The challenges of human suffering often lead to the *Existential Vacuum*—an internal pulling force, of inner void, emptiness, boredom, apathy, struggle, and meaningless existence. Logotherapy looks at the possibilities of the *human existence*, which can lead to the *Existential Vacuum*, blocking access to the *Nöetic (Spiritual) Dimension*, and possibly affect one’s mental and physical health, as two triads—*The Tragic Triad*, and *The Neurotic Triad* (Barnes, 2005; Graber, 2004).

One of the main goals of *Logotherapy & Existential Analysis* is to address the challenges of human suffering—experiences of *The Tragic Triad* and *The Neurotic Triad*, which often bring the patient into therapy in the first place. Within the *Nöetic* encounter between the therapist and patient, and through Logotherapy’s specific and complementary methods, the therapist assists the patient to activate and reorient toward one’s *Meaning Triangle*, which can ultimately lead toward *Self-Transcendence*, a meaningful existence, adaptive behavioral functioning, and a sense of healing.

**The Tragic Triad**—people in *despondency* experience:

- **Unavoidable Suffering**: Pain experienced from suffering that is unavoidable.
- **Guilt**: Responsibility, fault, or blame one experiences from a situation one has been a part of, caused, or has been affected by.
- **Death**: The deep sadness and/or questioning one experiences upon the realization of the transitoriness of life through the death of someone.

**The Neurotic Triad**—people in *despair* turn toward:
• **Depression:** The feelings one experiences in their inner world where they have lost their sense of will toward life; feelings of hopelessness or helplessness.

• **Aggression:** An outward expression of violence through the anger and rage experienced internally by means of controlling others; or aggression turned inward—the attempt to harm oneself through means of self-mutilation or, at the extreme end, with a suicide attempt—to extinguish one’s existence from this world completely.

• **Addiction:** The attempt to numb or dull pain and despair through substance abuse or a particular behavior; or exhibited as thrill-seeking behavior in order to experience invincibility and appear larger-than-life, without regard to consequences.

**The Existential Triangle: From Meaningless To Meaningful Existence**

In assessing patients’ current situation and difficulties, one can visualize Frankl’s three basic triangles—*The Tragic Triad, The Neurotic Triad,* and *The Meaning Triangle,* as parts of one larger Triangle—“The Existential Triangle: From Meaningless to Meaningful Existence,” coined by this author. Conceptualizing a patient’s movement through *The Existential Triangle* offers the therapist a holistic view of inherent possibilities within the difficulties experienced. The therapist can use this tool to help create awareness and responsibility in the patient of the meaning potentials, which are always possible regardless of *The Tragic Triad, The Neurotic Triad, Existential Frustration* and the *Existential Vacuum.*

At the base, in the two lower angles of the main triangle (*The Existential Triangle*), are *The Tragic Triad* (Unavoidable Suffering, Guilt, and Death) and *The Neurotic Triad* (Depression, Aggression, and Addiction). *Existential Frustration*—fed by the inner pain and outer despair experienced from the two triads, respectively, exists in this area.
When patients experience inner emptiness and despair, they feel the force of the Existential Vacuum pulling them down, maintaining desperation, and ultimately blocking access to the Nöetic Dimension. “The Existential Vacuum is in itself not a pathological state. It should be seen as a sign, calling to our attention that access to the Nöetic Dimension is blocked” (Graber, 2004, p.143).

However, this main triangle (The Existential Triangle) leads toward a peak, where one crosses an invisible barrier into the positive areas of growth, possibilities and meaningfulness. In this upper area of the main triangle, one becomes engaged in The Meaning Triangle through Creativity, Experiences, and Attitudes, culminating to the point of Self-Transcendence and meaningful living. Logotherapists assist patients experiencing the lower aspects of this Existential Triangle, namely the thoughts, emotions and behaviors of The Tragic Triad and The Neurotic Triad, through the methods and tools of Logotherapy, to cross the invisible barrier into the realm of Meaning making, through The Meaning Triangle and beyond—toward Self-Transcendence. It is important to recognize that due to the unpredictableness of life, human beings will fluctuate throughout The Existential Triangle, at any given time. It is precisely for this reason that Logotherapy & Existential Analysis aims to join patients where they are at in life, and assist them toward their own ultimate goals and possibilities.

Post-Traumatic Growth and Possibilities Activated in Logotherapy

Logotherapy looks toward the Post-Traumatic Growth and Possibilities of the individual rather than the Post-Traumatic behavioral difficulties and stress experienced by the individual. Logotherapy looks past the Pathos (Pathology) to the Logos (Meaning) within the unique individual.

Logotherapy explores:
• “How” one has grown from the experience?
• “What” has one taken away from the difficulty?
• “Where” does one see new possibilities in the face of setbacks?
• “When” will one actualize the new possibilities?
• “Who” is making a difference in one’s life, and are they making a difference for another?

Logotherapy emphasizes that human beings are not pre-determined beings, reduced and fated by intrinsic drives; rather, that human beings are Pushed by one’s Past while simultaneously being Pulled by one’s Future, concurrently fully existing and living in the Present Moment, with inherent Choices, Freedom, Meaning and Responsibility.

III. Conclusion

Frankl’s existential work is perfectly described by one statement: “‘Logos’ means the humanness of the human being—plus the meaning of being human!” (Frankl, 1988, p.18).

Logotherapy & Existential Analysis, a therapeutic approach conceptualized, designed and intended for addressing the difficulties of life humans experience on the existential realm, ultimately aims to assist patients to reorient themselves toward meaningful and purposeful living. “Logotherapy, with its meaning-seeking motivation—its spiritually based psychotherapy—can help clients find their nòetic goals and build a meaning-filled future” (Graber, 2004, p.186). And in Viktor Frankl’s words, “So life is potentially meaningful under any conditions, be they pleasurable or miserable” (Frankl, 1986, p.301).

The Logotherapeutic encounter is where the therapist encounters the fragility of the human being, yet simultaneously, the defiant power of the human spirit. The Logotherapeutic encounter and methods used in Logotherapy provide the resources for encouraging
the creativity held within humans, while on their search for meaning through the unique quality and ability of examining life—their existence. As Socrates once said, “An unexamined life is not worth living.” To be alive is to be creative, and likewise to be creative is to be alive. When we wake up to and become conscious of this aliveness, we can realize and actualize the many possibilities of our lives, and the inherent Meaning held within it!

(“Conceptual Pictographs” coined and designed by this author, have been included as patient handouts, in an effort to assist patients with themes addressed in Logotherapy & Existential Analysis in a visual format. These Conceptual Pictographs—handouts and more will be available in an upcoming workbook titled Meaning-Centered Therapy Workbook.)
References


Cultivating Collaborative Compassion in Palliative Care

Applying Logotherapy in Healthcare

Gabriel Ghanoum

In an environment that is increasingly becoming patient-centered, it becomes necessary and important to look at how we, as healthcare professionals, can cultivate an environment of “collaborative compassion,” by examining the clinician’s role in Palliative Care. This self-awareness enhances our humanness, empathy, connection, and organizational commitment. Research has shown that empathy and compassion can be taught, which suggests that it would improve the healthcare giver/patient relationship, decrease burnout and compassion fatigue of the clinician, and improve the overall quality of care.

Palliative Care is a specialized treatment approach, which attends to the needs of the patient and the family, and addresses clinical situations where life-limiting conditions are present for the patient. Palliative Care is a philosophy of care where the patient and family are the primary focus of care for persons facing a debilitating or life-threatening illness. It is patient and family centered care that focuses on the relief of symptoms and incorporates the psychological, social and spiritual care, while respecting the values, beliefs and culture of the persons. The Last Acts Precepts of Palliative Care offer this definition:
Palliative care affirms life and regards dying as a natural process that is a profoundly personal experience for the individual and family. The goal of palliative care is to achieve the best possible quality of life through relief of suffering, control of symptoms and restoration of functional capacity while remaining sensitive to the personal, cultural and religious values, beliefs and practices (The Last Acts Precepts of Palliative Care, www.aacn.org).

Additionally, Palliative Care is a comprehensive care, delivered at the same time with treatment; it is a collaborative approach with an interdisciplinary team of healthcare providers, such as doctors, pain management providers, psychiatrists, nurses, psychologists, social workers, nutritionists, chaplains, and other disciplines as needed. The team members, as a group, provide support to the patient/family through a holistic approach, taking care of the well-being not only the physical aspects, but the emotional and spiritual aspects as well.

Compassionate care can be thought of as opening oneself to the human dimension of the one who is suffering, to be able to detect the source of suffering, whether emotional, spiritual, existential or psychological, and requires an intensive focus on the patients and their experience. Additionally, it is important to be aware of our response as clinicians to the patient, in attempting to ease the source of suffering and bring comfort by addressing the needs with empathic and compassionate care.

The prophet Isaiah said, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people” (Isaiah 40:1); Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapy’s message is heard through Dr. Ann Graber’s work,

When he [Frankl] admonishes us that in cases where a cure is no longer possible, our humanity demands that we offer comfort and solace. And Lukas in Meaning in Suffering reiterates, ‘Therapists who
limit themselves to what is curable, practice their profession but fail in their vocation”” (Graber, 2004, p.149).

Logotherapy is an existential psychotherapy; a therapeutic approach which attends to the Mind, Body, and Spirit -- the unique essence of the individual -- and addresses core existential concerns such as meaning in life, suffering, and death (Frankl, 2004; Frankl, 2006).

When the focus is solely on the cure of the disease, healthcare professionals often miss the wholeness of the person expressed through the three dimensions -- Mind, Body, and Spirit -- and in understanding the unique situation of the person. Curing, without caring, causes suffering to patients and their families as well. "The good physician treats the disease, the great physician treats the person who has the disease" (Sir William Osler).

It is within the treatment model of Palliative Care that, together with Frankl’s Logotherapy, addresses the whole patient and creates a therapeutic encounter; this offers the clinician guidance in how to assist the patient in his/her meaning making, addressing of existential issues, and healing of despair and helplessness. Logotherapy honors the dignity of the person in his/her spiritual dimension, where clinicians can create a compassionate and an empathic encounter with unconditional positive regard. This is what promotes healing and self-transcendence.

How do we comfort? By listening attentively—listening is an act of love that opens the door to the interior of the other. We comfort by being available—being present to another human being who is in pain or anguish is a self-transcending act. It requires courage to offer to help carry another’s burden. It is a spiritual gift we bestow when we are there for others in their time of crisis, or time of
need, that calls for comforting” (Graber, 2004, p.150).

In Jesus' words, “I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance” (John 10:10). It is in this concept that life is sacred, where clinicians can help the patient to preserve dignity as well as to transcend adversity.

_Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapy_ is a therapy of "healing through meaning," which emphasizes that healing occurs on the spiritual dimension and that medical practice should address existential questions. Frankl used the term "Medical Ministry" not in religious sense, but rather in the way clinicians work with patients who face conditions of fate, where cure is no longer an option; it is acting on behalf of the patients by assisting them to find meaning in their pain and suffering through comforting and presence. This “comforting” through medical ministry is a philosophy of care on how we can assist the patient within their existential reality.

When cure is no longer possible, medical ministry is called for. Medical ministry is that aspect within the logotherapeutic system that deals with situations where the physical cause of the condition cannot be eliminated. Then the attitudinal value related to finding meaning in suffering is an appropriate approach in therapeutic interactions (Graber, 2004, p.150-151).

_Palliative care_ is a patient/family-centered approach and a philosophy of care to alleviate suffering and improve the quality of life; likewise, Medical Ministry is a philosophy of care appropriate to handle issues beyond the cure, improving the quality of life through meaning in life. Therefore, V. Frankl’s Logotherapy is a therapeutic approach that is compatible with Palliative Care, which serves to enhance comfort and cultivate humanness when there is no cure. It
should be stressed that “Medical care without compassion cannot be truly patient-centered” (Lown, Rosen, & Marttila, 2011).

Care is an all-encompassing word that implies: self-care, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and health care, which are the roots of empathy and compassion. When we think of Disney World, we think of fun; likewise, when we think of healthcare, shouldn’t we immediately think of empathy and compassion?

Compassion is hardly ever listed as a required course in the curriculum of our professional training, yet it may be the only course that requires a passing grade in the curriculum of life, not only as professionals but also as human beings, to help others bear their suffering -- physical, psychological, even spiritual -- when suffering is unavoidable and fate must be accepted (Graber, 2004, p.150).

Furthermore, “Compassionate care addresses the patient’s innate need for connection and relationships and is based on attentive listening and a desire to understand the patient’s context and perspective” (Lown, Rosen, & Marttila, 2011).

What is Compassion?

The word compassion is derived from the Latin words ‘pati’ and ‘cum,’ which together mean to ‘suffer with’ another person. Merriam Webster dictionary defines compassion as the sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it. Compassion is ultimately "a basic kindness, with a deep awareness of the suffering of oneself and of other living things, coupled with a wish and effort to relieve it" (Gilbert, 2009, p. xiii). In Gilbert's definition we can see that compassion has in its concept the affective feeling of caring and the motivation to alleviate and relieve suffering. "Gilbert referred to compassion as a social mentality because it
integrates motivation, thinking, feeling, and behavior in specific ways to achieve specific goals" (Crawford et al., 2013, p.720). The Dalai Lama also defined compassion as “an openness to suffering of self and others with a commitment to relieve it.” (Crawford et al., 2013, p.726).

The National Health Service Constitution of the Department of Health has defined compassion in practice: "We respond with humanity and kindness to each person's pain, distress, anxiety or need. We search for the things we can do, however small, to give comfort and relieve suffering. We find time for those we serve and work alongside" (Splander & Stickley, 2011, p.560).

Compassion embraces the uniqueness of the individual with care, presence, kindness, awareness, sensitiveness and dignity for another's life.

Compassionate care is defined by the following four essential characteristics: relationships based on empathy, emotional support, and efforts to understand and relieve the patient’s distress and suffering; effective communication within interactions, over time, and across settings; respect for and facilitation of patients’ and families’ participation in decisions and care; and contextualized knowledge of the patient as an individual within a network of relationships at home and in the community (Lown, Rosen, & Marttila, 2011).

Compassion is closely aligned with empathy. Empathy is a combination of cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component leads us to understand what the patient is going through, and the affective component guides us to connect emotionally with the patient by paying attention to the facial and non-verbal cues (Riess, Kelley, Bailey, Dunn, & Phillips, 2012).
Dr. Helen Riess, associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and director of the Empathy and Relational Science Program at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, developed an *Empathy Training Program*, to help resident physicians understand the neurobiological and physiological reactions they may be experiencing when treating patients who are in distress. In the training, physicians learn to recognize facial cues and nonverbal behaviors that can indicate a patient is in distress. Her empathy training program has helped physicians develop that deeper connection. A randomized controlled study conducted where 100 residents and fellows from six subspecialties participated in three 60-minute sessions of Riess’ empathy training, found that patients reported significant improvement in their physicians’ ability to empathize with them.

The training protocol had the following objectives: (1) to provide the scientific foundation for the neurobiology and physiology of empathy training; (2) to increase awareness of the physiology of emotions during typical and difficult patient-physician interactions; (3) to improve skill in decoding subtle facial expressions of emotion; and (4) to teach empathic verbal and behavioral responses with self-regulation skills utilizing diaphragmatic breathing exercises and mindfulness practices (Riess, Kelley, Bailey, Dunn, & Phillips, 2012).

Dr. Riess had coined the acronym of *E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.* as:

- **E**: Eye contact
- **M**: Muscles facial expression
- **P**: Posture
- **A**: Affect
This “EMPATHY” acronym can be used by healthcare providers to increase self-awareness with essential elements that will offer empathic care.

Additionally, the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE), at Stanford University, California, developed a 9-week *Compassion Cultivation Training program (CCT)*. Jazaieri and colleagues defined compassion as:

A complex multidimensional construct that is comprised of four key components: (1) an awareness of suffering (cognitive component), (2) sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective component), (3) a wish to see the relief of that suffering (intentional component), and (4) a responsiveness or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational component) (Jazaieri et al., 2013).

The findings of a randomized controlled trial of CCT suggested that: “CCT reduces the fear of compassion for others, for oneself, and being the recipient of compassion, and enhances compassion for oneself. Further, greater compassion meditation practice is related to greater compassion for others” (Jazaieri et al., 2013).

Furthermore, Dr. Ronald Epstein promotes “*Mindful Practice*” for physicians to increase self-awareness, which will foster connection and compassion for patients. Epstein states:

The goals of mindful practice are to become more aware of one’s own mental processes, listen more
attentively, become flexible, and recognize bias and judgments, and thereby act with principles and compassion. Mindful practice involves a sense of unfinishedness, curiosity about the unknown and humility in having an imperfect understanding of another’s suffering (Epstein, 1999).

As we have seen from the two trainings on empathy and cultivating compassion for clinicians, and an emphasis on incorporating mindfulness in the practice of healthcare, there are increased benefits on the giver (clinician) and the recipient (patient), as well as their relationship. Additionally, we can tailor Logotherapy’s techniques to be compatible for addressing the spiritual dimension by assisting patients in meaning, finding of hope and spiritual well-being, which has been missing in current medical psychological graduate training programs.

**Compassion Fatigue and Cultivating Collective Compassion**

The Dalai Lama once said: “Our prime purpose in life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.” “Don’t hurt them” becomes the salient issue. If we only focus on the patients and compassionate care for them, but forget to look at the caregiver, we will end up hurting the patients over time. Compassion for others begins with compassion for the self.

Palliative care is about improving the quality of life at the End-of-Life, but the question lies in how is our quality of life as healthcare providers and pastoral counselors? Being exposed daily with suffering, pain, losses, traumas and difficult encounters, do we feel energized at the end of the day or do we feel drained? Do we drag our feet going to work, or do we look forward to a new day where we have the opportunity to grow and make a difference?

Giving compassion and empathy without reenergizing ourselves, leads to compassion fatigue and burnout. Compassion fatigue
Refers to the profound emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals and caregivers can develop over the course of their career as helpers. It is the gradual erosion of all things that keep us connected to others in our caregiver role: our empathy, our hope, and of course our compassion—not only for others but also for ourselves (Mathieu, 2012, p.8).

It is essentially an inability to refuel and regenerate. Compassion fatigue and burnout are two aspects that can: steal the joy from the quality of our lives, create a collective wound, and transform empathy to apathy, passion to dispassion, and compassion satisfaction to compassion fatigue. Frankl reminds us that “What is to give light, must endure burning.” However, if the burning turns into “Burnt,” we lose our ability to help others as well as ourselves. Therefore, we end up missing out on our mission and calling of focusing on the well-being of the patients entrusted to our care.

When we appreciate our work as meaningful, we feel contentment and are energized; we create a healthy work environment that can enhance a positive energy, mutual collaboration, and compassion satisfaction that is derived from doing caring work and manifests happiness and contentment in our lives.

In her theory of human caring, she [Jean Watson] (2008a) describes the transformation that can arise within a single caring moment, a time when there is a deep connection between the person who is being cared for and the one who is the carer. Throughout her work, Watson emphasizes the important link between compassion for others and self, noticing that when we bear witness to and ease the suffering of others, we are contributing to our own well-being.
What does it mean “To Care?” “Caring is all about having a relationship with someone or something; it is about forming bonds between things, especially living things” (Todaro-Franceschi, 2013, p.20). Furthermore, “there are two types of care in nursing: the instrumental, which refers to the technical and physical aspects of care, and the expressive, which relates to the psychosocial and emotional aspects” (Todaro-Franceschi, 2013, p.21).

The spiritual component of healing is about being connected and present. Compassion is our connectedness with a heart-felt and a heart-full presence. The sense of awe and wonder emanating from our spiritual connection can be transformative and self-transcending. That "being-ness, we-ness, one-ness and with-ness," can create an atmosphere of comfort and peace for the patient and family.

There is an unquestionably inherent spiritual component to nursing, for spirituality is nothing more (or less) than a sense of being connected with everything and everyone else. Nurses who are heartfelt--compassion content--are those mindfully aware of their connectedness to others, and it fuels them to be with and do for their patients (Todaro-Franceschi, 2013, p.166).

To cultivate collaborative compassion aimed at healing and preventing compassion fatigue and burnout in healthcare, hospital clinicians need to build an environment based on collaboration and changing the culture of “me-ness” to a culture of “together-ness,” of teamwork, of collaboration in sharing the same meaning, purpose and values in our mission/vision of the hospital and patient care. “Radical Loving Care,” developed by Erie Chapman, and used in many hospitals across the country. Radical Loving Care is an approach that
begins with the leadership in the organization. Chapman’s concept is simple and practical: the need to cultivate loving care in order to provide loving care to the patients and to each other. In addition, every hospital leader should be taking care of those who care for others (Chapman, 2005).

The hospital either embodies the necessary exemplary corporate culture or it does not. It is either a place in which all employees find satisfaction in their work or it is not. It is impossible for hospitals to provide a rich and rewarding environment for nurses alone. Every individual—from the CEO to the entry-level employees affects, and is affected by, the quality of the work-place environment (Todaro-Franceschi, 2013, p.175).

Continuous Education and Awareness on Empathy and Compassion

Creating awareness and an environment of compassion through continuous education and awareness on empathy and compassion and its benefits on self and others, is essential to cultivate the seeds of collaborative compassion in Palliative Care and End-of-Life. This can be done through various means, such as: staff education with off-site seminar training; in-house seminars and teaching days; staff support/process groups; monthly newsletters with helpful tips about the power of presence, recognizing grief, balanced compassion, and self-care. With the support of hospital management to facilitate a culture of compassionate care and effective communication at End-of-Life these worthy goals can be achieved.

The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare is an organization dedicated for the physicians, residents and other staff in hospital settings, addressing issues to cultivate compassion and improve patient/staff relationships.
Our goal is to ensure that compassionate care is a fundamental element in the design of healthcare systems, the provision of care, the measurement of healthcare quality and outcomes, and the education of all healthcare professionals—so that compassionate care becomes and remains a national priority” (Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare, www.theschwartzcenter.org).

Hospitals can utilize this organization for assisting in staff education or develop a model similar to the Schwartz Center. Some of the topics that our hospital has created to address cultivating a shared meaning and purpose, and collaborative compassion throughout the hospital are as follows:

"Caring for the caregiver;"
"Self care in the healthcare;"
"Decreasing compassion fatigue and increasing compassion satisfaction;"
"Spirituality in the healthcare: improves spiritual well being;"
"Communication is about connection;"
"Listening to the dimensions of pain;"
"Attending to our prejudice when treating patients with addiction and/or homelessness."

**Conclusion**

In healthcare there is a myth that showing empathy and cultivating compassion require a lot of time, when in reality it saves time, builds rapport, trust, connection and sends signals to the patient that we care. When we listen, we can ease their fears, worries, and distress, while understanding patients’ concerns; this helps them to find meaning, hope, spiritual well-being and will contribute in
strengthening the communication between the clinician, the patient and family.

Frankl refers to the Logotherapeutic relationship as the “Therapeutic Friendship,” which essentially becomes a “Sacred Encounter.” Building upon the I/Thou relationship, being fully present to the patient in a loving, caring, respectful and non-judgmental encounter, allows for a “Sacred” environment. Here the patient can begin their path to discovery and inner healing that may radiate outward. “Logotherapy builds a relationship of trust on the humanity of the client, on the human spirit with its will to meaning” (Graber, 2004, p.103).

In the space of the “Sacred Encounter,” the primary purpose of the therapeutic relationship is to meet the patient where he/she is. “It is when man is robbed of his dignity that he becomes ill… The dignity of a human being has been injured, his sense of personal adequacy has been undermined, his freedom to be unique has been curtailed” (Leslie, 1982, p.102).

Being present with, or as some refer to it as “With-ness” (Graber, 2009, p.33), allows the clinician to assist in the discovery of meaning, the restoration of the original beauty and dignity, recovering the feeling of being valued and finding hope, and feeling comfort and love. Working with these aspects through the therapeutic encounter/sacred encounter, offers the patient the possibility to transition from this life, and die with dignity, peace and comfort.

Once we have cultivated that sense of “Being Present With the Person,” in its entirety, observing the signals that he/she is sending us, moving from the chief complaint to the chief concerns of the patient, we create connection; that connection contributes to improve the experience of the patient, which is reflected through the impression and perception of the patient. Then, and only then, can we harvest the fruits of our mission of caring and changing the culture from a compassion deficit to compassion surplus. It is here that Logotherapy assists the clinician in developing and finding meaning and purpose, as well as assisting patients to find meaning in suffering,
(the difficulties of their present situations and diagnoses).

In conclusion, Henri Nouwen, the Dutch theologian, speaks to us and confronts us to care for the whole person when he asks the question of how many people leave hospital settings cured from their physical ailments, but are left hurt by the impersonal care from staff (Nouwen, 1972). We must ask ourselves, what can we do to create a more compassionate care? Then find ways to embark on this new area of collaborative compassion in healthcare.

References


Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.


Tradition and Traditions
Explorations in Ecumenism

Robin Gibbons

*The Aquinas lecture, given at Saint Mary’s University Twickenham, Middlesex (UK), October 2013*

**Tradition Rediscovered**

The Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, promulgated on November 21st 1964, set the Catholic Church on a route that has changed the Christian map. Its opening phrases point out a road of no return. Even if it has seemed an impassable or difficult road, the call to travel with others on it is still as valid today as it was then: ‘The restoration of unity among all Christians is still one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only’ (1). The problem of one Church became complex when people decided to define it theologically, but as the ecclesial world is also diverse multiple definitions emerged, some in harmony with each other, some not! The issues about unity and diversity become yet more bewildering when one sees the vast number of different Christian communities calling themselves ‘church’ throughout the world.

Yet the call to unity is there from the inception of Christianity, the book of Acts (Acts 2:42) mentions the hallmark of the Christian is commonality, *koinonia*, unity in faith which is a theme running throughout the NT epistles. The liturgical elements revealed in the
scriptures and the early church, remind us that initiation is not into a cult or club, but into the very life of Christ and the family of God, where all are united and where the continuity of this connective unity is the regular and worthy celebration of the Eucharist and attendance at prayer, as well as sharing one’s life and goods (2). The impetus is simple, this is what Christ desires and calls us to strive for, that all may be one. This is not fanciful imagery but comes from the revelation of our scriptures and the living tradition of the community called Church. As the Apostle teaches us: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism". (Eph. 4, 4-5.) For "all you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3, 27-28) (3).

Unitatis Redintegratio points out that this movement towards unity is ecumenical, that is, as the word oikumene suggests, a journey for Christians throughout the whole inhabited world. But if we are to be serious about it, we need to rediscover both the living ‘Tradition’ that we as Christians share in common and the particular (denominational/ecclesial) ‘traditions’ that connect with it, but nevertheless allow legitimate diversity. You might well ask what do I mean? Simply put I am going to use the phrase ‘Tradition’ or ‘traditions’ to describe a way of being, how Christians have somehow interpreted the Gospel and lived it in each age so that it fills and informs their lives. I hope to make connections with a wider theological understanding of tradition in the Christian context of ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue, seeking to find common ground in Christ, seeking to bring about the Unity of Christ’s body of which we are the members and he is the head. Then there is a third strand, to suggest how those of us engaged in mission, teaching, ministry or witness in settings within the academic world, that have fundamental Christian backdrops, such as those within the UK setting of education such as St. Mary’s University, founded on the values of Saint Vincent de Paul, or Heythrop College with its great Jesuit tradition. This applies to Colleges both from the Catholic Church or any of the
Church Colleges and Schools that we are linked with, here we can reach out in knowledge and understanding not only within our own churches but in dialogue with others outside of faith structures. It applies to other areas of life as well and impacts on the place of Religion in public life itself. But I shall limit myself to the Christian tradition as it gives us a clear locus of exploration and examination.

I am reminded of something the great Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, Bishop of Sourozh of the Russian Orthodox Church in Britain, used to say when he talked with other Christian groups, that we can never dialogue properly or even understand another ecclesial group, unless we know our own church well. That takes courage, for to know our own tradition ‘well’ requires us to unlearn so many things we think important and essential. It means in St. Benedict’s opening word of the Rule, ausculta, to listen to the voice of the Spirit who will also show us, in other communities, what is missing in our own. Though the Church of Christ may subsist in the Church, no one Church is the Church of Christ, or, let it be said, a full manifestation of the Kingdom. I have often reminded those who seek to join the Catholic Church from other ecclesial communities that they must always have a love and respect for the Church of their baptism and early growth in faith, because in truth that is where they first became members of the Body of Christ. In dialogue with the atheist founder of La Repubblica, Eugenio Scalfari, Pope Francis spoke of an outline of a plan of simple action which echoes this approach:

We need to get to know each other, listen to each other and improve our knowledge of the world around us. Sometimes after a meeting I want to arrange another one because new ideas are born and I discover new needs. This is important: to get to know people, listen, expand the circle of ideas. The world is crisscrossed by roads that come closer together and move apart, but the important thing is that they lead towards the Good. (4)
Despite criticism of the Pope, for what some have considered a tendency to wade into the fray in a reactive and populist manner, his words are not new, nor are they populist. They are just deep concepts of a wider ecumenical endeavour couched in language that reaches beyond the confines of academe. The Pope is at home in his skin, is relaxed in his comprehension of his own church. In a simpler sense he is reiterating just what his predecessor Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Spe Salvi* suggested was essential for the future of religion. This is to get people into dialogue from the context of their tradition, to discover their roots in ‘hope’, which I suggest is the great ‘Tradition’, and then to reach out and offer dialogue, attentive listening and openness towards others. This is to root ourselves in hope, that, alongside faith and love constitute the three greatest gifts of the Spirit we receive. Perhaps it is this hope which will become one of the greatest gifts the religious person can share with the world. In *Spe Salvi* Benedict XVI articulated what Anthony Bloom shared about rootedness:

Again, we find ourselves facing the question: what may we hope? A self-critique of modernity is needed in dialogue with Christianity and its concept of hope. In this dialogue Christians too, in the context of their knowledge and experience, must learn anew in what their hope truly consists, what they have to offer to the world and what they cannot offer. Flowing into this self-critique of the modern age there also has to be a self-critique of modern Christianity, which must constantly renew its self-understanding setting out from its roots (5).

In knowing what we can and cannot offer suggests a deep understanding of our familial roots and a deeper understanding of the great and living tradition of the Church. It is also involves
commitment not only to self-understand and critique, but also to creating positive ecumenical thought and attitudes amongst Christians. It compels us to enter the deep, because we have to go beyond the prejudices of the second millennium of Christianity to look at the early strata where the Christians of the pre-Constantinian church lived out their commitment and hope, as well as looking forward into the third millennium and dare one say it, as Christians always have, in expectans expectavi Domini (6), longing for that great and second coming of Christ.

I can give an example from our own context. What still dominates the Christianity of the British Isles and Europe is that five hundred year swathe of Christian history, the Reformation. For a long while the moving apart has been paramount and the coming together and listening relegated to set texts and static answers, usually polemical and apologetic in tone, such for instance in the emergence of two different and particular ways of looking at the ecclesiastical and theological term ‘tradition’. One group of Christians rejects any attempt to place theological or doctrinal weight on the word tradition as being of much consequence, only accepting the primary guidance of the Holy Scriptures, the other coupling scripture and tradition together as a key theological concept. Even if we are unsure of just what this ‘tradition’ is, most of us will have come across the debate in one form or another. Yves Congar summed it up quite neatly when he wrote this in his introduction to his book, The Meaning of Tradition:

Yet the theological problem of tradition will not be entirely new to the reader, since the history of his country, and the conditions of life amid the religious divisions and entanglements of this world of ours will scarcely allow him to remain unaware of the existence of the controversy between Catholics and Protestants--the latter claiming the authority of Scripture alone, the former adding to it "tradition" (7).
This is part of what once was a polemical debate, but the arena is no longer the same. That there are those who believe solely in Biblical inerrancy and faith built on ‘sola scriptura’ just as there are others for whom certain doctrines and practices are immutably fixed in some ancient and divinely mandated ‘tradition’ handed on in pristine form from one generation to the next. The real danger is that these can become exaggerated caricatures and cease to relate to common life, let alone external scrutiny by intelligent people or that self-criticism and understanding advocated by Spe Salvi. We need other voices to break through into the dialogue and fortunately they have always been present. There is perhaps a balance to be found in the ecumenical engagement with the ancient Churches of the East both Oriental and Byzantine (8), for whom word ‘tradition’ has a very deep spiritual and living meaning and perhaps can show us that difference can be good and true. One such area of recovery is the rediscovery of ancient ‘Tradition’ that was in place long before doctrinal dissensions; that of prayer and lives lived in prayer. One small example is that of Saint Basil, one of the revered fathers of the past who understood that there were three sources of authority and tradition in the Church: Scripture, written tradition such as the Fathers, and the unwritten traditions such as the worship of the living Church. In a letter written to the Presbyters of Tarsus concerning the Divine nature of the Holy Spirit, Basil argues cogently for a tolerant and open attitude towards members of the faith so that communities might be reconciled. Here there is no great call for an absolute uniformity, he recognises the foundations of belief, suggesting the Nicene Creed as a common link, but leaves further explorations and discussion to a more lived encounter in discussion, pastoral life and prayer.

At such a time, then, there is need of great effort and diligence that the Churches may in some way be benefited. It is an advantage that parts hitherto
severed should be united. **Union would be effected if we were willing to accommodate ourselves to the weaker, where we can do so without injury to souls;** since, then, many mouths are open against the Holy Spirit, and many tongues whetted to blasphemy against Him, we implore you, as far as in you lies, to reduce the blasphemers to a small number, and **to receive into communion all who do not assert the Holy Spirit to be a creature,** that the blasphemers may be left alone, and may either be ashamed and return to the truth, or, if they abide in their error, may cease to have any importance from the smallness of their numbers.

**Let us then seek no more than this, but propose to all the brethren, who are willing to join us, the Nicene Creed.** If they assent to that, let us further require that the Holy Spirit ought not to be called a creature, nor any of those who say so be received into communion. **I do not think that we ought to insist upon anything beyond this.** For I am convinced that by longer communication and mutual experience without strife, if anything more requires to be added by way of explanation, the Lord Who works all things together for good for them that love Him, will grant it. (St. Basil the Great, Letter 113: To the Presbyters of Tarsus) (9).

I use Basil because his words suggest more is gained by seeking a common ground, and then through *praxis* including shared prayer (the Lord...will grant it) comes mutual learning. This is much the same as Augustine showed in his approach to the plurality of customs found in the Church of his own time. He attributes this to the wisdom of Ambrose of Milan, who showing what I would call true pastoral
care and a deep solicitude for the distinction between a tradition and the foundational faith, helped Augustine’s mother Monica discern the legitimate diversity within the Church and as a result helped Augustine perceive the same:

He (Ambrose) followed me, and said: "When I visit Rome, I fast on Saturday; when I am here, I do not fast. On the same principle, do you observe the custom prevailing in whatever Church you come to, if you desire neither to give offence by your conduct, nor to find cause of offence in another's." When I reported this to my mother, she accepted it gladly; and for myself, after frequently reconsidering his decision, I have always esteemed it as if I had received it by an oracle from heaven (10).

Though this might be about one aspect, fasting, we might remind ourselves that far from being an inessential of faith practice, fasting was, and still is, extremely important to a number of religions including Christianity. What part it played (or plays) in communities’ structures can therefore be considered important, especially as the Lord advocates a type of fasting in scripture, so this pastoral attitude of Ambrose helps Augustine to see that a living transmission of tradition is what Yves Congar describes as the inclusion and preservation of

positive values gained, to allow a progress that is not simply a repetition of the past. Tradition is memory, and memory enriches experience. If we remembered nothing it would be impossible to advance; the same would be true if we were bound to a slavish imitation of the past. True tradition is not servility but fidelity (11).
My own work as an Eastern Catholic (not Roman now) has opened for me a personal journey that opens the early connections of the Church as both one in faith, but many in experience and custom. This also impacts in other ways too, going back to see our theological and ecclesial genealogy is not a Lot’s wife view of things, but a recovery of identity, often hidden from view by later problems and happenings, that enables new progress to be made.

It seems to me highly appropriate that as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, this discussion and recovery of debate and dialogue about tradition in a much wider setting should take place. *Dei Verbum*, though it starts out by asserting what appears to be a classic catholic statement, nevertheless opens a door to hopeful exchange, indicating that somehow beyond the setting of doctrine, be it biblical or biblically interpreted by tradition, there is a deeper and living encounter with the one source:

… Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

Thus, all of the teachings of the Catholic Church come from either Tradition or Scripture, or from the magisterium interpreting Tradition and Scripture. These two sources, Tradition and Scripture, are viewed and treated as one source of Divine Revelation, which includes both the deeds of God and the words of God:

This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while
the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them (12).

What we have here is a wonderfully liberating insight that scripture and tradition are indissolubly linked and belong to the living Word of God. How it is interpreted and lived is part of the dialogue, but a dialogue that is in Christian terms understood as connection with the role and gift of the Holy Spirit. This is nothing new at all, Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History quotes Papias a second century Bishop of Hierapolis concerning the oral tradition of the Church:

Whenever anyone came my way, who had been a follower of my seniors, I would ask for the accounts of our seniors: What did Andrew or Peter say? Or Phillip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any of the Lord’s disciples? I also asked: What did Arison and John the Presbyter, disciples of the Lord say. For, as I see it, it is not so much from books as from the living and permanent voice that I must draw profit (13).

The Church of the East has this rich understanding at its finger tips, that there is a context for the Scriptural tradition that belongs to the oral and lived transmission of faith in the setting of the living church, in its preaching, teaching liturgy and prayer but above all in mutual love. Vladimir Lossky puts it succinctly; “Tradition … is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church” (14). Many of these communities were hidden from the West for centuries. Most of the Syriac and Eastern Byzantines, both Orthodox and Catholic, existed as Arab communities, but with dhimmi status, within the great Ottoman Empire. Learning to accommodate themselves with Islam and suffering in the process. Although there was trade and encounter with Russia and the Slav countries, Christianity there remained largely cut off from western ideas and under communism was nearly
obliterated. But these churches are churches of faithful living tradition, especially in their worship and practice, and let us not forget that they are still the Church of martyrs. Their tradition has been a source of ecumenical encounter especially in the 20th century, because it is rooted deeply in the early history of the Christian community. The words of a monk of my own monastery who became an Orthodox monk resonate deeply with me in this understanding:

O strange Orthodox Church, so poor and so weak… maintained as if by a miracle through so many vicissitudes and struggles; Church of contrasts, so traditional and yet at the same time so free, so archaic and yet so alive, so ritualistic and yet so personally mystical; Church where the Evangelical pearl of great price is preciously safeguarded — yet often beneath a layer of dust… Church which has so frequently proved incapable of action — yet which knows, as does no other, how to sing the joy of Pascha! (15)

Monasticism as one of the Prophetic Places for Renewal

One of the great exponents of wider ecumenical dialogue during his later life was the monk Thomas Merton. If at first he had the zeal of a new convert and embraced the catholic form of monastic life in its penitential Trappist format, before the reforms of Vatican II, he nevertheless grew into a different spiritual person and engaged with the deeper and formative ‘tradition’ of monasticism that pushes the monastic beyond the comfort of known spiritual hinterlands and borders, that applies to Christians in general too. Merton has always been influential in my own life, not least because his writings on monasticism and spirituality have widened my own monastic perspective, but because he stands at the edge of things, an
uncomfortable but creative place where in prayer, silence ceases being absence but instead becomes the unceasing dialogue with God.

Whilst he has a wide following, there are others who remain critical of him and the untidy strands left in his rather short life, but to be a person of paradox is no bad thing. For one thing in Christian terms it may reveal the mystery of God who in the Spirit is as much present and at work in the sinful, darkened places of our lives, as well as the joyful encounters in the light. This is helpful in placing us within the context of true humility and the necessity of attentive listening to God and to our neighbor, but it also leads us to discern the difference between living tradition and mere convention.

Writing about monastic vocation Merton mused on the difference between tradition and convention, at the time of writing, the monastic order as a whole, remained very traditional in its outlook rooted to what one can call a ‘classical’ form and rhythm of life as many monasteries still are. The guiding light for so many communities being the Rule of Benedict, but often fidelity to the Rule meant exclusion of other inspirational sources. Merton questions whether that insight is or was totally correct. It is true that in the long history of the Church Benedictine monasticism has played a vital and valuable role and I was and am somehow an inheritor of that wisdom, but there is a danger that what appears to be tradition is actually a way of living out a convention. It is easy for us to create something different by mis-translating the source or language. Yves Congar told the story of the Russian translator at the1956 Anglican/Orthodox discussions in Moscow: ‘During the discussion the question of tradition and its relationship with Scripture was raised. The Russian interpreter, doubtless unacquainted with ecclesiastical terminology, spontaneously translated the word "tradition" by the expression "ancient customs"’ (16). There are far too many such mistranslations on the map of ecumenism, it often comes with not listening to each other, but happily there are correctives.

The different groups within the Christian tradition itself ought to show us that no one way holds all the answers, no one church has all
the keys to the door of life. The Catholic Church itself needs to be reminded that it does not simply comprise of one Roman Church, but of twenty-two others all in communion, and all these, without exception, rooted in the East. Benedict’s Rule, important though it is, was only a great and balanced synthesis of other rules and teachings, moulded and framed in patterns both eastern and western written a particular time, one of deep historical unrest where the guidance of societal structures remained in the hands of one figure be it emperor, bishop, abbot or lord. Even Benedict was not immune to a weight of convention, though he had enough wisdom to put gentle correctives to that imbalance and grounded his vision in a living and evolving community. That is tradition in its living format. As Avery Dulles wrote in his foreword to Congar’s book on ‘Tradition’, that is why monasticism in both east and west can be a pointer to the deeper structures of the church. Perhaps a glimpse of this corrective may be seen in places where the Rule of Benedict opens our sight to glimpse the root tradition, where we discover the love of God at work: ‘For as we advance in the religious life and in faith, our hearts expand and we run the way of God's commandments with unspeakable sweetness of love’ (RSB) (17). The key here is engagement, perseverance and living out in experience with others.

In his chapter on ‘Vocation’ in his book, ‘No Man is an Island’, Merton suggested that in monasteries there was very little living tradition, even if the monks called themselves traditional, because what they were doing was living out a set of ‘conventions’ which may seem like tradition but is not, and in the end can be inimical to tradition. This insight certainly clarifies some aspects of what we can call the living tradition of the Church. Here is how Merton divides it, and I quote a fair section because it is classic Merton, punchy and to the point:

Tradition is living and active, but convention is passive and dead. Tradition does not form us automatically: we have to work to understand it.
Convention is accepted passively, as a matter of routine. Therefore convention easily becomes an evasion of reality. It offers us only pretended ways of solving the problems of living- a system of gestures and formalities. Tradition really teaches us to live and shows us how to take full responsibility for our own lives. Thus tradition is often flatly opposed to what is ordinary, to what is mere routine. But convention, which is a mere repetition of familiar routines, follows the line of least resistance. One goes through an act, without trying to understand the meaning of it all, merely because everyone else does the same. Tradition, which is always old, is at the same time ever new because it is always reviving- born again in each new generation, to be lived and applied in a new and particular way. Convention is simply the ossification of social customs. The activities of conventional people are merely excuses for not acting in a more integrally human way. Tradition nourishes the life of the spirit; convention merely disguises its interior decay (18).

I would argue that this is a good, sound, theological way into ecumenical dialogue and encounter, because it highlights areas that we can note in our own lives as well as that of the Church, but it will also take us on a journey to discover the source of our own tradition and the living movement throughout time that has enabled the community to carry on expressing its faith in the source of all truth in different and variable ways. There is a final point Merton makes on this which takes me to the roots of this particular journey. If there is anything that we can take from the early journey of Christianity, it is that our faith ancestors were not afraid to be creative, nor were they
afraid to love, for those who take that journey to rediscover their roots and learn from them see the living tradition in life, for:

…tradition is creative. Always original, it always opens out new horizons for an old journey. Convention, on the other hand, is completely unoriginal. It is slavish imitation. It is closed in upon itself and leads to complete sterility. Tradition teaches us how to love, because it develops and expands our powers, and shows us how to give ourselves to the world in which we live, in return for all that we have received from it (19).

**Tradition and Ecumenism in our Market Place**

What then of ourselves? I can only offer a personal reflection at this point, so forgive the intrusion of the personal. As a theologian I am aware that like Thomas Aquinas, my writings and words can only achieve so much, they are not replacements for a lived faith nor communal dialogue. Yet like so many, I feel I have been blessed along the route by the angels met unawares, those who by their lived experience opened out the route to true ecumenism and showed me the foundations of their tradition. My own priestly ministry has been lived out as a monk, as a lecturer and teacher, as a committed ecumenist, as a Latin rite Catholic priest who was called to serve the Eastern Rite Catholic community as one of their pastors, as somebody who has worked with and alongside Anglicans to such an extent I have been integrated into their life as an Ecumenical Canon. My obituary, when it comes will not be an easy one to write! The Society of Jesus played a huge part in my academic formation in school and at Heythrop, I remain convinced that vocation in the different forms I have experienced has been due to the living witness and faith of a tradition handed on by such teachers as Fr Kevin Donovan SJ and Fr Joseph Laishley SJ (20). Saint Mary’s played its part too, for here I
spent the greater part of my academic life, here too the spirit of openness could be felt in the dimension of life percolating through the Vincentian mission, but also through the inspiration of people such as the late Professor Michael Prior C.M., who whatever one might say, was a true son of Vincent de Paul reaching out beyond all kinds of boundaries (21). The place is the sum of its people and this place has as its root tradition the foundation of true Catholicism in its widest sense. Perhaps we need to rediscover and renew in our witness the ecumenical and encapsulating gift of Vincent de Paul, in his ‘teachings, which emphasize respect for the individual, service to the needy, human solidarity and adherence to the belief that giving of one’s self helps make the world a better place’.

As in so many places it is community, as in St. Mary’s case the Vincentians, who gave to the institution a tradition. Here they moulded, by a kind of spiritual osmosis, generations of Simmarians (22) with an openness and adaptability towards others, but also an enquiring and deep faith. It is a good time to recover that spiritual wisdom of Vincent because it gives us an ethos that is distinctive and living. One could do no better than to remind oneself of his nuanced and balanced view of things, such as his insightful view that ‘in the final analysis virtue is found not in extremes but in prudence’ (23). Vincent being a wise pastor and lover of humankind, ought to remind us all that part of the task of a college like this, especially one linked to Christian values, will also be to act as a moderating influence, allowing full engagement and dialogue but always in a spirit of charity. Again his teaching points out the necessity of listening across the board, intelligence does not always equate with insight, experience is always a road of deep learning and in particular when it comes to religious matters, the right type of zeal needs to be inculcated.

In one of his letters Vincent reminds us of a factor well known but often ignored, something those of us who deal in education might well remember: ‘Get what you can gently from them. True, it is good
to be firm in attaining your goal, but use appropriate, attractive, and agreeable means’ (24).

It also allows academic communities like this to be centers of engagement, dialogue, encounter and hope. Perhaps at the heart of that can be the endeavor of a community to learn from each other and to trust each other.

From the point of view of our academic institutions this is what I think true ecumenism consists of: a university community built on the foundations of what we can call the ‘great tradition’ and our ‘genuine traditions’.

Tradition always implies learning from others, but the academic type of docility and imitation is not the only one possible: there is also the will to learn from the experience of those who have studied and created before us; the aim of this lesson is to receive the vitality of their inspiration and to continue their creative work in its original spirit, which thus, in a new generation, is born again with the freedom, the youthfulness and the promise that it originally possessed (25).

As we celebrate 50 years since the Second Vatican Council began, we must return to John XXIII’s call to aggiornamento. No place associated with the Church can look back, only continually renew itself in the Spirit. Bishop Christopher Butler OSB, who was the English Catholic Bishop Theologian at the Council, wrote about John XXIII’s vision of aggiornamento, which he translated as a ‘bringing up to date’. In a prophetic reflection Butler pointed to what still has to be done, the commitment to reach across the divisions of time that have deeply wounded the Christian community, revisiting them to heal the hurt and acknowledge the problems faced and brought about by each group involved. The underlying assumption, which must be ours in fact and deed is that people of faith are people
of ‘good-will; even those who differ from us. How much more should that be for all who teach, learn, research, administer and proclaim the gospel in education. Butler saw Vatican II as a first step on a journey and reminds us of one inescapable factor, that faith can also be a great adventure in love:

‘But it should be observed that in the text of St Matthew’s Gospel (XXVIII 19f) …the making of disciples is mentioned before the teaching of the commandments. Proclamation (kerygma) precedes instruction (didache). Unless the work of evangelisation comes first, there is no one to instruct, none with a faith to be protected.

The Church is therefore necessarily outward-looking, not primarily introspective and conservative, but primarily an indomitable adventurer into new fields. What else could she be, since she is, as St Augustine taught us, the incorporation of Christian love or charity? Charity is the least introspective of virtues, calling us always to transcend the self and its immediate horizon’ (26).

Perhaps I ought to end with a plea for a new way of envisaging ecumenism, where the meaning of the word ‘catholic’ implies love for the other together with a deep respect for who they are and where they come from, knowing that in Christ we are one. I turn to Congar again, who sums up Charles Peguy’s word ressourcement, return to the sources, which is perhaps the word I would like to end on, for it sums up a complete manner of being, that of always seeking that fons et origo of Christian life and in doing that all of life, this is the search for God:
‘this appeal to "tradition" is made in a new way; ressourcement (a return to the sources) is in fashion. This splendid word, coined by Charles Péguy, implies a return to the origins, or more often an advance to the present day, starting from the origins. This idea springs from Péguy's conception of revolution and reform as "the appeal made by a less perfect tradition to one more perfect; the appeal made by a shallower tradition to one more profound; the withdrawal of tradition to reach a new depth, to carry out research at a deeper level; a return to the source, in the literal sense" (27).

Endnotes

2. Ibid.
3. Unitatis Redintegratio n2.
6. I waited patiently for the Lord ps 140.
8. I use this term as distinct from Orthodox to include the many Byzantine rite Catholic Churches, the term oriental covers both groups.
19. Ibid.
20. Fr Kevin Donovan SJ, taught Liturgy and Pastoral Theology for many years at Heythrop College and was regarded as one of the great ‘inspirational liturgists’ and pastors of his time. He died in 2008. Fr Francis (Joe) Laishley SJ was Professor of Theology at Heythrop College, another inspirational person and one of the best known PhD supervisors.
21. Professor Michael Prior cm, d 2004, was the last teaching Vincentian at St Mary’s University, Twickenham. He was twice Head of the Theology and Religious Studies Department. A larger than life character, Michael was also a dedicated priest striving always for gospel values and the justice of the Kingdom, he was one of the founders of Living Stones and a passionate liberation theologian.
22. Simmarian is the collective noun for Alumna/Alumnae of St Mary’s University Twickenham.
24. To Etienne Blatiron, Superior, in Genoa, 9 September, 1650 online library http://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/3/.
Common Ground for the Common Good

C. Anthony Hunt

At the root of American Protestantism is an ongoing quest for an appropriation of the common good. Martin Luther’s call for the reformation of the church in the 16th century seemed to signal a call for Christian communities to address matters of ecclesial, theological, and socio-political significance to the masses of people. By its very nature Reformation faith and Protestantism served as a faithful protest against what was viewed – at least to some degree – as the perceived class abuses of the church and society – directed primarily toward the poor. In as much as the Protestant Reformation was to become a protest against some of the practices of the church - as perceived by Luther and others - it would also become a framework for reforming and reframing some of the practices of Christianity in the search for common ground and the common good.

The quest for the common good became one of the marks of enlightenment faith that would be the hallmark of early Protestantism in America. In his book *Pilgrims in their Own Land*, Martin Marty (1984, p.75) intimates that although early 15th and 16th century settlers in the American colonies were largely “pilgrims of dissent,” what they shared was a common quest for freedom, and that colonists were “knit together by law, religion, and custom.”

It seems that much of the quest for an appropriation of the common good in the late 19th and early 20th centuries can be viewed against the philosophical and ethical backdrop of utilitarianism. Although there continues to be a great deal of debate as to the merits
of utilitarianism as a philosophical and ethical construct, at least in some measure, it was the thinking of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, among others, that provided the framework to talk about what is good and what it is that brings about the common good. Thus, a critical question of utilitarianism is, what is it that brings about the "the greatest possible good for the greatest possible number of individuals?"

In the social teachings of virtually every American Protestant denomination that has emerged, there has been an expressed concern for the common good. In foundational documents of the Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran churches among other Protestant denominations, there are statements which point to concerns for the common good within the denominations themselves, and within the context of the churches’ ecumenical and interfaith relations.

In the Methodist churches – which I am most familiar - the theology and practice of communality and common good finds its primary point of reference at the place of social holiness – where the concern for vital piety and religious practice – is coupled to (married with) concerns for acts of charity and justice – as seen in social witness, societal engagement and the common good. Thus, the primary theological mandate of the Methodist Churches was and has continued to be “to reform the nation and spread scriptural holiness.”

In much of American Christianity, and certainly in the Protestantism of the early and mid-20th century, there continued to be a clear quest for an appropriation of the common good. This was seen perhaps most clearly in an articulation of the Social Gospel by Walter Rauschenbusch. In his seminal work, A Theology of the Social Gospel, Rauschenbusch (1945, p.1) stated that “we have a social gospel.”

And so, according to Rauschenbusch, the Gospel, by its very nature is “social” and has communal implications. Rauschenbusch’s ministry and work in New York City laid the foundation for a clear movement in many American Protestant circles in the mid-20th century toward the predominance of evangelical liberalism – as also
espoused by the likes of Howard Thurman. Like Rauschenbusch, Thurman would assert that the Gospel by its very nature is “social” and thus concerned with the common good.

In one of his works, which he entitled, *The Search of Common Ground*, Thurman (1971, pp. 2-3) argued that this search for common ground is a universal search among all of humanity. He stated that “A person is always threatened in one’s very ground by a sense of isolation, by feeling oneself cut off from one’s fellows. Yet, the person can never separate oneself from one’s fellows, for mutual interdependence is characteristic of all life.” Thus for Thurman, this common, universal quest and search for common ground has teleological implications, as it essentially provides the framework for the meaning of life itself.

Thurman’s articulation of a “search of common ground” ultimately served as one of the primary theoretical precursors to the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his articulation of a vision of “beloved community” which became the theological grounding for the quest for civil rights in America, and other subsequent human rights movements – and quest for common ground - across the globe.

Interestingly, in *On God’s Side*, Jim Wallis (2013, p. 109) offers that “The Beloved Community Welcomes All Tribes.” Wallis shares a quote from King that “our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.”

The singular theological and societal vision of King was for the realization of *Beloved Community*. In their seminal 1974 work entitled, *Search for the Beloved Community*, Kenneth Smith and Ira Zepp, Jr. (1974, see pp. 129-156) suggest that King’s perspective on the Christian love-ethic provides critical insight into understanding his persistent search for the *Beloved Community*. For King, it was rooted in the biblical notion of *Agape* (God’s unconditional love), and was the ultimate goal for society.

King asserted that “all life is interrelated.” One of his fundamental beliefs was in the kinship of all persons. He believed all
life is part of a single process; all living things are interrelated; and all persons are sisters and brothers. All have a place in the Beloved Community. Because all are interrelated, one cannot harm another without harming oneself. In a sermon entitled “Loving Your Enemies” (Strength to Love, 1963, pp. 41-50) King said:

To the degree that I harm my brother, no matter what he is doing to me, to that extent I am harming myself. For example, white men often refuse federal aid to education in order to avoid giving the Negro his rights; but because all men are brothers they cannot deny Negro children without harming themselves. Why is this? Because all men are brothers. If you harm me, you harm yourself. Love, agape, is the only cement that can hold this broken community together. When I am commanded to love, I am commanded to restore community, to resist injustice, and to meet the needs of my brothers.

It seems that much of what was articulated and in-fact appropriated as the common good through the middle of the 20th century has been obscured at the least, and at worst has been lost and forgotten. Churches, perhaps as a reflection of society in general, seem today to have become more inwardly focused - religion and faith has become more privatized and insular. As a result, forms like ecumenism, interreligious and interfaith dialogue, and the capacity of the churches to critically engage culture and society have, in large measure, been diminished.

And so what might be some things to consider in a turn back toward common concern, and a common quest for common ground and the common good?
Imperative

Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr. were among those who spoke to the divine and moral imperative – the calling - that Christians share in seeking common ground, the common good and beloved community. This imperative – this calling - is rooted and grounded in a divine commitment to advance the appropriation of the Christian love-ethic as foundational for constructively moving toward the realization of authentic community and common good. Thurman asserted that God’s intent is for the human family to live in community as interrelated members. Jesus came into the world to call persons back into community.

An imitation of the unconditional love revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus can be helpful in the quest for common ground and common good. Moving toward a deeper sense of who we are as individuals and community will enable us to live more shalom-filled lives, modeled on the life of Christ. There is the obligation to treat every person as Christ Himself, respecting her/his life as if it were the life of Christ.

Inspiration

In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Howard Thurman (1976, pp. 11-35) asserted that Jesus was acutely aware of the cultural context of his ministry. Jesus knew that his teachings regarding God’s justice, love, mercy, forgiveness and peace would cause controversy and get him into trouble. Yet, he remained faithful to his mission, and sought to perpetually live the God-inspired message that he had been given.

For the church, the appropriation of community as a transformational Christ-centered, Spirit-filled process needs to be understood within the context of God’s ongoing work in salvation history. The development of common ground for the common good thus requires God-connectedness through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
Like Christ, it has been suggested that Howard Thurman was a “God intoxicated man,” and as such offered a paradigm of God-centered and God-inspired ministry. Perhaps, it is the case today that Christians are beckoned to live likewise in a God-intoxicated way, as we seek to bring about the common good among us.

**Integration**

The quest for common ground and the common good is at the heart of the church’s ministry. The church, the community of those who confess Christ as Lord, is an embodiment of community – and common good within history. For this reason, the church is called to model community and must help the world to achieve common ground, while believing that unity among human beings is possible – and community is fully evident - only if there is real justice for all.

I sense that this quest, this striving for common good, as it is to be realized, must be filled with hope. A commitment to the realization of the common good offers real hope for the world in which we live. Community – common ground – by its very nature - is integrative. Authentic community includes persons of different races, sexes, ages, religions, cultures, viewpoints, lifestyles, and stages of development - and serves to integrate us into a whole that is greater – more actualized and dynamic – than the sum of its parts. Forms of disintegration and disunity are, therefore, to be understood as antithetical to the common good, and to the will of God.

**References**


Chaplaincy in Oncology Palliative Care

Diane Kreslins

Historically, healthcare provided pastoral care through the patient's religious leaders; volunteer ordained clergy; and hospital staff chaplains. Currently, end of life palliative care programs are required by the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Palliative Care Programs to have a chaplain on their interdisciplinary team. The integration of the chaplain on an interdisciplinary team requires clinical coordination of clinical to ensure that quality spiritual care is provided by the oncology palliative care team. Understanding the complexity of spiritual distress experienced by patients with advanced cancer emphasizes the need for a competent board certified chaplain to address a patient’s spiritual distress and enhance their spiritual health and well-being. In essay I will reflect on the board certified chaplain’s qualifications and pastoral role as a member of the oncology palliative care team.

Spirituality is important to a patient receiving oncology palliative care. Cancer research has proven that spirituality has health benefits, clinical impact, and clinical outcomes. The National Consensus Project (NCP) on Quality Spiritual Care (2013) requires the use of an interdisciplinary team (IDT) as an effective approach to quality spiritual care in palliative care for patients and families. The IDT clinical specialist team includes the physician, nurse, social worker, and a chaplain, preferably a board certified chaplain.

The chaplain’s education and competencies have been identified by national organizations that are recognized by the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Pastoral Services (JCAPS). These include the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), the
The board certified chaplain has earned a Master's Degree in Theology or Pastoral Studies; has completed four units (a total of 1600 clinical hours) of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE); has maintained good standing in the church of endorsement for certification; commits to the chaplaincy code of ethics and standards of practice; completes ongoing education requirements for renewal of certification every five years (50 continuing education units (CEU) per year for a total of 250 CEUs for certification renewal purposes; and maintains their financial dues and certification/renewal certification fees. According to Ferrell and Puchalski (2010), the “specialized education enables chaplains to mobilize their spiritual resources so that their pastoral encounters and interventions can fully address the needs of their hospital constituency” (p. 160).

The core intervention of chaplaincy care is to initiate and sustain empathetic relationships with patient, families and staff. The APC (2009) and NACC (2009) collaboratively developed Standards of Practice for Professional Chaplains in Acute Care Settings. The INTRODUCTION to the Standards contains three sections. Section one gives direction to chaplaincy care with patients and families in providing assessment, delivery of care, documentation of care, teamwork and collaboration, ethical practice, confidentiality, and respect for diversity. Section two gives direction to chaplaincy care for staff and organization in providing care for staff, care for the organization, and chaplain as leader. Section three gives direction to chaplaincy care for maintaining competent chaplaincy care in regards to continuous improvement, research, and knowledge and continuing education. These standards focus chaplains on their role and responsibilities in healthcare; and provide a way to evaluate chaplains’ performance in the organization where they serve.

One may wonder why the healthcare chaplain needs to be specialized with 1600 hours of clinical pastoral care and board
certification beyond the Master Degree in Theology or Pastoral Studies that most clergy have earned. The reason is that the healthcare chaplain works in a pluralistic environment where spirituality and religious preference is focused on each individual patient according to their beliefs, practices and community. The chaplain is not permitted to proselytize or evangelize. They are translators of hospital culture and language. They are members of healthcare interdisciplinary teams and ethics committees; and some hold Mission Leader and other administrative roles. They have appropriate access to patient care information and adhere to laws and regulations on healthcare confidentiality. They are consulted by the medical team for patients who experience spiritual distress. They document in the medical record the patient spiritual assessments, interventions, outcomes and plans of care; and provide ongoing pastoral counseling; and supportive resources for spiritual health and well-being of patients, families, staff and the community. The community clergy and religious leaders on the hand work in a homogeneous environment where their focus on religious beliefs within one denomination; and where evangelization is permitted and encouraged, and they preach and teach; have administrative roles; and celebrate rituals within their community. The patient's religious and/or spiritual leaders are collaborative providers with the chaplain in reducing spiritual and/or religious distress; and enhancing spiritual health and well-being for their member.

New titles for chaplains are emerging that may be more fitting for the role of the chaplain in healthcare such as spiritual care coordinator, spiritual care practitioner; spiritual care provider, etc. Chaplains are serving not only in the acute patient care but also ambulatory areas such as physician offices and clinics. The titles may vary however the requirement for board certified chaplain will remain.

Ann Graber (2009) defines the spiritual dimension as "the core or deepest center within that is open to a transcendent experience of
ultimate reality" (p. 19). Carrie Sanders (2002) describes the spiritual dimension as providing “meaning, significance, making sense of one’s life, deriving purpose, value, transcendence, connection, and becoming” (p. 107). Puchalski et.al., (2009) defined spirituality as “the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred” (Journal of Palliative Medicine, Volume 12, No. 10). My definition of spirituality is simply one's natural ability to transcend to a sacred space within to be in relationship with God, self, and other's on earth and in eternity.

Spirituality and/or religion are very important through illness and offer hope when all seems hopeless. The patient's spiritual journey begins with the question, "What is my life about in relation to what I am going through?" According to Reed (1992), spirituality refers to the “propensity to make meaning through a sense of relatedness to dimensions that transcend the self in such a way that empowers and does not devalue the individual” (pp.349-357). Finding meaning in relation to a terminal diagnosis requires spirituality as in being in relationship with self, God and others. Furthermore spirituality has benefits:

It gives meaning to suffering and helps people find hope in the midst of despair. In the midst of suffering, a skillful, caring and compassionate health care professional can be an important anchor in which the patient can find solace and the strength to move though distress to peace and acceptance. Illness and dying are essentially spiritual processes that often provoke deep questions of meaning, purpose, and hope. (Ferrell and Puchalski, 2010, p. 3).
Research indicated that cancer patients who rely on spiritual and religious beliefs to cope with their illness are more likely to use an active coping style in which they accept their illness and try to deal with it in a positive and purposeful way” (Flannelly and Weaver, (2004), pp.1210-4). Spiritual coping improves quality of life. According to Johnson et al. (2011), "Patients with advanced illness reported that greater spiritual wellbeing were significantly associated with few symptoms of anxiety and depression" (pp. 751-758). Patients who are part of a faith community seem to be less lonely and have a reduced sense of isolation. Zaza et al.'s (2005) research on "what patients do to cope with cancer revealed that 292 cancer outpatients reported prayer (63.7%) as the most commonly used coping strategy, followed by music (42.4%) and religious support (27.4%) with individual counseling and support groups being used by 22.9% and 10.6% of the sample" (pp. 55-73). Spiritual coping appears to aid in better adjustment to the effects of cancer and its treatment. Patients also seem to have an increased ability to enjoy life during cancer treatment; and a feeling of personal growth as a result of living with cancer.

According to VandeCreek (2010), “Spiritual care is defined as giving professional attention to the subjective spiritual and religious worlds of the patients, worlds comprised of perceptions, assumptions, feelings, and beliefs concerning the relationship of the sacred to their illness, hospitalization, and recovery or possible death” (pp.1-10). Addressing spiritual and religious needs in healthcare provides relief from cancer pain in non-medical ways. A cancer pain management must offer a trusting relationship between the healthcare provider, the patient and their caregivers (loved ones). One’s inner ability to heal is different for each patient. According to Puchalski (2001), “Cure is not always possible for many illnesses, but healing can be experienced as acceptance of illness and peace with one's life” (p. 2). Accepting that cure is not possible for the cancer patient takes time. I remember how my son-in-law who had advanced cancer reacted when he was told he had six weeks left to live. He was devastated.
Acceptance was heart breaking but there was nothing we could do to change the outcome. We held onto faith to help us to cope with the scientific reality; and to find peace through dying. We gathered as a family at home one evening with my son-in-law and told him how we each loved him and made promises of how we would support him and his family through the weeks ahead as he neared death. The IDT must recognize the importance of the patient taking time to search the unknown questions about their personal life in relation to end of life.

Thomas Moore suggests that the "healthcare provider must cultivate depth as well as sacredness to engage in soul work; and understand the patient as a unique child of God" (as cited in Graber, 2009, p. 33). This can be difficult especially when a patient rejects God and others. Yet by cultivating the art of active listening with a dying person it is possible to “embrace spiritual intelligence, establish a safe place for dialogue, foster an atmosphere of tranquility and harmony that created a sacred space where communication beyond words was possible; and be attentive” (Graber, 2009, p. 33). The practice of active listening allows the patient and family to verbalize their experience of the spiritual dimension of health and distress related to illness, dying and death. Active listening with compassion, care and concern for the patient enhances the dignity and quality of life of the patient and family.

The healthcare chaplain models the pastoral question, “What is the most loving thing to do for God, self and others?” Loving another may be to shine light into dark places of another’s life; or to bring warmth and love into cold and hateful relationships; or to be the image and mirror of God to another. The chaplain provides sacramental moments of Grace and strength, a drink of water for the thirsty; company for the isolated; food for spiritual hunger; and good counsel for the distressed. Through these pastoral interventions the patient is spiritually restored, renewed and refreshed. Spiritual distress is reduced and health is restored.

There are numerous health benefits to spirituality in that "it gives meaning to suffering and helps people find hope in the midst of
despair" (Ferrell and Puchalski, 2010, p. 3). A patient will search for God’s meaning and purpose when they experience tragedy (desolation) such as grief and loss due to chronic life threatening illness. Most believe that God’s will would be easy and light not spiritually distressing. A diagnosis or progression to advanced cancer is spiritually distressing. However, when one finds God’s meaning and purpose in their life they experience consolation through grace that is God’s presence.

A few years ago I noticed that the outpatient oncology palliative care patients were requesting pastoral counseling. These patients were not signed on with hospice but were receiving palliative cancer treatments. They hope that the treatments will slow their cancer growth so they live longer; and that the treatment will relieve pain. Most of the time patients who request pastoral counseling are experiencing an existential crisis related to their experience of life. The chaplain’s role is not to “fix” the person by giving advice, or theological education, or evangelization, or homework assignments, or penitential acts. The chaplain’s role is to direct the patient toward God through prayer, invitation, companionship, listening, observation, noticing God’s action in the life of the other, clarifying through active listening, and sharing of spiritual images and metaphors rather than theology as appropriate. The chaplain affirms the activity of God in the life of the patient and counsels and consoles the patient.

The healthcare chaplain provides pastoral counseling so that another can discover meaning and purpose in life; experience an intimate union with God; reconcile relationships; bring closure to life; and find peace. Human life is created and molded and shaped by God. The relationship with God begins at the moment of conception when human cells begin to multiply and develop into a fetus. This creative relationship with God begins the spiritual life of the human person. All humans have a shared spiritual life with one another as they are created by the same God. They have a shared nature that requires the same basic needs such as water, food, health, housing,
jobs, money, love, relationships, etc. Within each human there is a natural law within. The natural law informs one’s conscience to do the right thing and avoid evil. This conscience provides discernment on what to do and what not to do. The conscience is personal but can also be communal. The conscience guides our moral life so that we make choices that are in order with God’s law.

Conscience guides one to live in union with God’s plan. The human becomes a seeker to find the divine purpose and meaning of their live. This is a spiritual quest that is natural. This quest is the way to finding God’s plan for one’s life. The seeker eventually finds that their ego gets in the way of their divine self or true self. It is here that the oncology palliative care patient seeks out a pastoral counselor (chaplain, clergy, or spiritual director) for direction to find one's purpose. Grief and loss create obstacles and moral choices that confront the patient. Pastoral counseling allows the patient to search the obstacles; confront the moral choices; and weigh and measure them in the light of their relationship with God.

During pastoral counseling the patient is seeking God’s purpose but is confronted with their ego. The ego has no place for God’s purpose. Pastoral counseling is an invitation from God to find one’s true self, to struggle with the ego, and to find God’s plan for one’s life. The human ego develops through life from birth to death. The ego is a false self. The ego is self-centered and leads one away from God toward one's will. The spiritual life aids one in letting go of ego/self; and in discovering one's true self. Pastoral counseling is a spiritual practice that allows one to unite with God to find one’s true self; and leads one to God’s plan and purpose for their life. Through this union with God one is transformed into the image and likeness of God. The patient is no longer a seeker now he/she is a journeyer on the path to holiness.

God is with the patient as they journey on the path to holiness. They meet in a quiet space where they can listen to God in the sacred story of the patient. This space allows the patient to enter one’s interior life. God dwells and guides in the interior life. The human
heart is exposed and examined. The chaplain creates a space for God’s direction and guidance in pastoral counseling. The patient shares moments in life that they would like to reflect on spiritually for guidance. The chaplain notices and names God’s movement in the life of the patient. Spiritual growth and development advances at its own pace and cannot be rushed. The chaplain must let God guide even if there is not enough time to complete everything before death.

When I reflect on pastoral counseling I imagine a patient and chaplain seated in a chair on a large Ferris wheel. Both are seated safely and then the ride begins. They are alone and no one can hear what they are saying. They are lifted high and then go down and then up again similar to the vicissitudes of the lived life experiences. As they ride together they become aware of God with them. The chaplain actively listens and clarifies as needed so as to understand the consolations and/or desolations of the patient's life. The chaplain responds under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to heal spiritual distress related to the patient’s sacred story. God speaks to both patient and chaplain according to the plan for their lives; and they are aware of God with them on their journey of spiritual discovery. When the ride comes to an end they are unbelted and their feet touch the earth again. They leave the counseling session more aware of God’s peace, healing, guidance and unconditional love for them. God’s spiritual guidance and direction is the outcome of pastoral counseling.

My primary focus for pastoral counseling is discovery of God’s life in the life of another. Those who are dying need compassion, companionship, understanding, mercy, love, hope and faith. Prayer becomes an important way of communicating with God. They need encouragement to use forms of prayer such as worship, meditation, centering, contemplation, solitude, journaling, listening to God, music, scripture, etc. They need to know that prayer is simply listening or talking to God; and that God will reduce their burden of spiritual distress.
Respect for another's spirituality while respecting one's own is a balance that is needed for the chaplain's self-care. How both provider and patient find meaning and purpose in their different roles will be personal to each; and both must use their personal and communal belief systems to manage their spiritual and religious needs on a daily basis. Chaplains will find it helpful to regularly reflect on their personal spirituality and how it relates to the quality of spiritual care they provide to patients living with advanced cancer. The following spiritual reflection questions are for chaplains who serve in healthcare to use personally or with other chaplains for spiritual self care.

1. When do you take time to reflect on your spirituality?
2. How does your spirituality relate to the spiritual care you provide?
3. What meaning and purpose do you find in your role on the IDT?
4. How do your spiritual and/or religious beliefs, practices and community sustain you in your personal and professional life?
5. What is your experience of pastoral counseling?
6. Name the ways you compassionately care for another in spiritual distress.
7. What have patients taught you about spiritual life in end of life?
8. How does God care and renew your spirit daily so that you can continue to serve in the ministry of Jesus to heal the sick, comfort the dying, and bless the grieving?

In this essay I reflected on the board certified chaplain’s qualifications and role as a member of the interdisciplinary oncology palliative care team; and my personal and professional experiences as a board certified healthcare chaplain. The chaplain is responsible to address the patient/family/staff spiritual distress; and to enhance the spiritual health and well-being of patients/families/and staff.
Understanding the complexity of spiritual distress emphasizes the need for a board certified chaplain as a member of the oncology palliative care team.

References


Marriage, Family, and Sexuality across Ethical and Religious Divides

Ronald W. Langham

Introduction

The subject I have chosen to address may broadly be placed in the category of, “Marriage, family and sexuality across ethical and religious divides.” The specific question is “We should judge homosexual behaviour by the criterion of mutual love.”

In epistulam Ioannis ad Parthos, St. Augustine gave us the oft quoted standard,

Once for all then, a short precept is given thee: Love, and do what thou wilt: whether thou hold thy peace, through love hold thy peace; whether thou cry out, through love cry out; whether thou correct, through love correct; whether thou spare, through love do thou spare: let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good
(Welsh, 2003).

Should such quote be accepted on face value then the quick and easy answer for the question would be yes, we should judge all sexual behavior by the criterion of mutual love because surely, if as Augustine suggests, the root of love be within the action, then only good can come of that mutual love and its expression. Such simplicity
will not suffice for most ethicists nor, I am sure, would Augustine have approved of such an interpretation of his words.

In addressing the specific question, I proceed on that basis that we are speaking of the mutual love of two persons, being of the same gender, expressed through consensual genital behavior in the context of a committed relationship akin to marriage. It is not my intention to question whether promiscuous sex is immoral, even when there is full consent and free-will; that is a matter for another time and place.

**On Homosexuality**

Before considering the question in its fullness one must consider among other things, the ethical considerations of homosexuality. There is currently perhaps no more controversial question for Christian/church leaders; for some the issue is settled in the affirmative (acceptance), for others it is not open for discussion and homosexuality per se remains,

[Those] acts which, in the Church's moral tradition, have been termed "intrinsically evil" (*intrinsece malum*): they are such *always and per se*, in other words, on account of their very object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances (Paulus-PPII, 1993, p. 80).

Such teaching reflects the long-held (general) Christian view that genital homosexual acts are depraved, evil and immoral, and stand condemned by historical authority such as the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. From these scriptures and their interpretations two principal assumptions have emerged over the millennia:

- Homosexual behaviour is harmful to society.
Homosexual behaviour is immoral (or sinful or unnatural). Over time these terms were used interchangeably and equivalently.

These Christian attitudes towards homosexuality developed over three basic periods:

1. From the beginning of the Christian era until the mid-nineteenth century;
2. The mid-19th century until the Second Vatican council (1962-65); and
3. From the Second Vatican Council until the present

During the first period the rationale for forbidding homosexual acts was based on:

- Perceived human nature - "[T]hose shameful acts against nature, such as were committed in Sodom, ought everywhere and always to be detested and punished. If all nations were to do such things, they would be held guilty of the same crime by the law of God, which has not made men so that they should use one another in this way." (Augustine, n.d).
- Perceived purpose of human sexuality - Clement of Alexandria stated that “…to have sex for any purpose other than to produce children is to violate nature” (McNeill, The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Sciences, p. 213).

The second period from the nineteenth century saw a medical model and new attitudes emerge after Benkert coined the term “homosexual” (Haeberle, 1914). This change in attitude from the medical sciences in particular forced a change in the method by which
the Roman Church dealt with the issue of sexual aberration, as they saw it. For example, Noldon & Schmitt made the following statement:

Sexual perversion is not always a sign of sickness of mind; perversions are also found in those who suffer no psychological defect, it nevertheless seems possible to claim that perversions are present more frequently in men who are sick in mind than those of sound mind (1902, p. 42).

With the passing of time and the eventual coming of the Second Vatican Council, Rome was able to soften its approach somewhat with adaptations of the medical model to a point where they were able to say that “Homosexuality and...other sexual deviations...are grave pathologies and are to be treated in medical ethics” (Haring, 1979, p. 564).

While the first period concerned itself with the act of sodomy, and the second was concerned with the person rather than the act, both continued with a generally negative approach to the morality of homosexual acts. This negativity continued to be justified by Scripture, the Magisterium (or teaching authority of the church (Augustine, Aquinas, John Paul II, et al)), and perceived human nature (natural law).

In addition to the three basic stages described, there is a fourth stage which overlaps stage two and the Second Vatican Council, and continues until this day. In some circles this stage could be described as “Post-modern”, emergent, or even subversive theology, or that period where no knowledge is “…assessed outside the context of the culture, tradition, language game, etc. which makes it possible and endows it with meaning” (Bauman, 1992, p. 102).
It has been during this period that we have dared to consider thoughts such as those of Blenkinsopp, regarding the final authority of scripture:

The Canon does not contain its own self-justification but rather directs our attention to the tradition which it mediates. For...without the tradition there is no shared memory and therefore no community...no one interpretation of the tradition can be accorded final and definitive status...it will always be possible and necessary to remold [sic] the tradition as a source of life-giving power” (Curran & McCormick, 1984, p. 242).

In contrast to the first two periods, and the ongoing stance of Rome et al, the fourth period saw a “...change in climate of thought about sex ...” Since Freud much public emphasis has been placed on the importance of sexuality as an element of human personality” (Moore, 1998, p. 224).

The position adopted by Moore followed that officially taken in 1973 when the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association [APA] removed homosexuality from the DSM in 1973 after reviewing the evidence that it was not a mental disorder. In 1987, ego-dystonic homosexuality was not included in the DSM-III-R after a similar review (Psychiatric Treatment and Sexual Orientation, 1998, p. 1).

Herek reinforces the APA view and the theories of Freud stating that “Mainstream mental health professional and researchers have long recognized that homosexuality is a normal expression of human sexuality;...being gay or lesbian bears no relation to a person’s ability
to …lead…a happy, healthy and productive life” (Herek, 2007, p. 17).

This change in climate also saw contemporary figures of theological influence such as Rowan Williams (prior to his installation as Archbishop of Canterbury) state that "The Bible does not address the matter of appropriate behaviour for those who are, for whatever reason, homosexual by instinct or nature" (Wynne-Jones & Beckford, 2008).

Even within churches of an Evangelical nature we are now finding a shift in attitude, demonstrated by Pastor Rob Buckingham, of Australia, who is quoted as saying, “I believe the Christian message is for everyone and it breaks my heart that some sections of the church have left people out and even shunned them” (Church advocates for gay acceptance, 2009). Buckingham goes on to say:

I think it’s time we took a closer look at all the Scriptures relating to homosexuality and, at least, stop bashing gay people with the same verses in the Bible….So much of the Bible speaks of the love and grace of God towards everyone. Why not focus on this? (Ibid).

Anti-“anti-gay” attitudes, research, and literature now abound and there is a shift in paradigm away from the stance of the early (and oft-times, contemporary) church leaders to that which is more in line with the acceptance by the vast majority of western people, that homosexuality is not abnormal and homosexuals should enjoy full participation in every aspect of society.

Despite the (majority) secular acceptance of homosexuals, the theological climate in respect of homosexuality is by no means settled and there remains a difference in biblical and scientific interpretations. I refer to Shinnick for insight as to the future possibilities:
...the theology [regarding homosexuality] is emerging from the lives of gay and lesbian people themselves and not from the halls of academia...It is a theology driven by two convictions: an understanding that homosexuality is a gift from God, and that gay and lesbian people want to stay within the church” (Shinnick, 1997, p. 135).

I leave the last word in this section to the Jewish Scriptures, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good...” (Gn 1:31).

**On sex, marriage, and same-sex unions**

As with the issue of homosexuality, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures have much to say on the issue of extra-marital sex. For example, in Genesis (Cf, Gn 1:28; 2:24) and Exodus (Ex 20:14) we see the basis laid for the unacceptability of sex outside of marriage. Proverbs 5:3-7 also warns the Jewish Nation of the perils of adultery and this is reinforced in Proverbs 6:24-26. The Christian scriptures follow the Jewish lead with Jesus reportedly telling the woman accused of adultery to, “…go and sin no more…” (Jn 8:11). A second evangelist gives us,

Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate “(Mt 19:4-6).

The Apostle Paul follows this with,
Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife (1 Cor 7:1-4).

It is clear that Paul advocates that sexual activity should occur only inside the confines of marriage, if it is to occur at all, and that virginity or abstinence was preferable. The Council of Trent affirmed this stance in the 16th century with the finding that:

If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema (Waterworth, 1848, p. C.10).

This was not the last official decree from the Roman Church on the matter and Pope Paul VI wrote that:

Students ought rightly to acknowledge the duties and dignity of Christian matrimony, which is a sign of the love between Christ and the Church. Let them recognize, however, the surpassing excellence of virginity consecrated to Christ, so that with a maturely deliberate and generous choice they may consecrate themselves to the Lord by a complete gift of body and soul (Paulus-PPVI, 1965, p. 10).
The records show that most major Christian denominations continue to hold to the official view that sex outside of marriage is a sin (regardless of sexuality) and this position has been underpinned by pre-existing attitudes such as indicated by Moore (above). Perhaps these views can be summed up in the words of Cardinal Franjo Seper:

Whatever the motive for acting this way, the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty. For it lacks the sexual relationship called for by the moral order, namely the relationship which realizes the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love (Persona Humani, 1975, p. IX).

The historical and biblical understanding of marriage though as being “the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life” (Marriage Act, 1961, p. 41) is under fire and review from many quarters. Same-sex marriage now exists as a legal entity in no less than seventeen countries and fourteen states of the USA (Status of same-sex marriage, 2013). Even in recalcitrant countries such as Australia, popular opinion runs some 60% in favour of granting same-sex couples equal access to the entity known as marriage (Noonan, 2009).

Marriage of course is no longer understood socially just as a legal entity or a vehicle for procreation, it is also considered “a social, emotional, mental and physical contract between two individuals (What does marriage mean?, 2006). These attributes are not of course the domain of heterosexuals alone. As Herek states, “…the vast majority of gay and lesbian people function well in society and…in their personal relationships (Herek, 2007).
On love

To arrive at any answer to our basic question we must not only consider what is moral or ethical, but we must also attempt to understand what love is, something not satisfactorily achieved over the millennia.

There are different forms of love such as “caritas,” defined by Webster as a “love for all people” (Caritas, n.d.) and “cupiditas,” or “eager desire” (Cupiditas, n.d.). In plain English, the former could reasonably be seen as a type associated with “love your neighbour” (Mk 12:31) while the latter could be seen as love of a somewhat more concupiscent type.

Gibran gives some insight into the difference between love and passion:

   Your soul is oftentimes a battlefield, upon which your reason and your judgement wage war against your passion and your appetite. Would that I be peacemaker in your soul, that I might turn the discord and the rivalry of your elements into oneness and melody (Gibran, 1926, p. 59).

He goes further and attempts to describe what true love may be:

   Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself. But if you love and must needs have desires, let these be your desires: To melt and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night.

   To know the pain of too much tenderness. To be wounded by your own understanding of love; And to bleed willingly and joyfully (p. 15).
Corinthians 13:1-8 of course gives a widely accepted Christian definition of the attributes of love although it fails to address the psychological or physical impact or import of love. As a Christian I believe that God is “love,” as succinctly described in The First Letter of John, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 Jn 4:7-8). Despite the high probability that he would not have wished it to be used in such a context, I confidently consider this verse in conjunction with that of Augustine as cited earlier, and recall that if “…the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good”.

**Conclusion**

In contrast to the widely accepted view that sexuality is, “…the combination of our sexual identity and the instinctual response of attraction to other people which it fosters” (Gadden, 1992, p. 83) the majority of Christian denominations continue to hold the view that the genital expression of homosexuality is immoral or unethical, as it is for heterosexuals outside of marriage. Likewise, the major churches remain some 40 years behind medicine in the acceptance of homosexuality as a normal expression of humanity.

For the major denominations to move from the concept that all sexual activity must be contained with the context of heterosexual marriage there will need to be a major shift in theology from biblical literalism to a realisation that “…God [was] not the author of the Bible. [Rather] it was written by a variety of human beings over about 1000 years of human history trying to interpret their God experience in their time (Spong, 2008, p. 13).

The study of ethics over the millennia has produced a plethora of theories including the biblically based, many of which have held sway at various times. If though “…ethics refers to well based standards of
right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues” (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks, & Meyer. n.d), then it is difficult to see how the physical expression of love and commitment of two consenting adults, regardless of gender, can be judged as inappropriate. This is particularly true if the sexual act is undertaken with a view to,

...go beyond ourselves to become who and what we truly desire to be, that which we are created to be: lovers. [Because] opening yourself [to] achieve and receive the grace of intimacy is a much more soul satisfying way to live your life.” (Anonymous, n.d)

If indeed I believe that God “…saw everything that he had made, and…it was very good…” (Gn 1:31) then I must believe that homosexuality, and its genital expression in an equal, long-term and loving relationship is good, valid and acceptable when “…it is a loving expression of [a] total person to person commitment and that commitment is itself a definition of "love". (Archbishop Terry Flynn, personal communication, 29th October 2009).

It is my firm belief that we should judge all sexual behaviour by the criterion of mutual love, not just homosexual behaviour. I would add that I believe that ‘…the first word of God to man is to be and become more fully human and so to fulfil, and not frustrate, the essence of man, as man” (Anonymous, n.d). The expression of love, and one’s self, through genital acts must surely be viewed as part of being fully human. I leave the final words to Gordon Merrick, “I say, if it’s love, the Lord won’t mind. There’s enough hate in the world – Mrs Sapphire Hall Harlem 1940” (The Lord Won't Mind, 1970, p. inside cover).
References


The Spinning of the Webs

The Dynamic Processes of Culture and Religion and the Potential for Religio-Cultural Synergistic Synthesis

William Moneyhun

Foundations

This essay rests primarily upon the convergent work of three persons. The first is American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), who paraphrased the work of Max Weber in his 1973 essay, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” when he wrote of himself, “The concept of culture I espouse…is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man [humankind] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be whose webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (p. 5).

The second is the German-American theologian and philosopher of religion, Paul Tillich (1886-1965) who, in his address to “Life, Its Ambiguities, and the Quest for the Unambiguous Life” in the third volume of his Systematic Theology wrote, “Culture, creating a universe of meaning does not create this universe in the empty space of mere validity. It creates meaning as the actualization of what is potential in the bearer of the spirit—in man [humankind]” (1967, p. 84).
The third is former president, current and long time faculty member of the Graduate Theological Foundation, John H. Morgan, who in October 1977 drew these two statements together as he formally recorded his recognition of a point of dialogue between Clifford Geertz’s anthropology and Paul Tillich’s philosophy of religion and theology with his article, “Religion and Culture as Meaning Systems: A Dialogue Between Geertz and Tillich,” which appeared in the Journal of Religion published by the University of Chicago Press (p. 367), and which is also currently available in his book Being Human: Perspectives on Meaning and Interpretation (Essays in Religion, Culture and Personality) (2006a, p. 21). Morgan (2006a) wrote that Geertz’s work was “the first major attempt within anthropology to utilize the category of meaning as an integral part of the analysis of religion” (p. 18), and added, “Furthermore, in addition to religion, Geertz is suggesting that a responsible analysis of culture must also cope with the category of meaning” (p. 18). Regarding Tillich, Morgan showed how, as he put it, “The concept of meaning played a vital role in Tillich’s treatment of the relationship between religion and culture…” (p. 19).

Morgan (2006a) summarized his essay by briefly recapping how he began with a “definition of culture as ‘patterns of meaning’ (Geertz) and religion as ‘man’s encounter with the meaning of being’ (Tillich)” and “worked through these meaning systems to their systematic analysis” in his effort “to demonstrate the possibility of a positive dialogue between anthropology and theology” (p. 30). Stated differently, Morgan was acutely aware that both Geertz and Tillich pursued their inquiry into culture and religion within their respective fields in terms of a concept of “meaning,” and concluded that this provided a basis for a worthwhile exchange between Geertz’s anthropology and Tillich’s theology and philosophy of religion. This essay utilizes Morgan’s insight into the work of Geertz and Tillich and brings his separate work to bear in its treatment of the dynamic processes of culture and religion, their relationship, and their inherent potential for synergistic synthesis.
The Difference a Dialogue Makes

One conspicuous question that Morgan’s article raises is why such a conversation is worth seeking in the first place; and although he did not directly address this question in his essay, Morgan skillfully laced its pages with an answer. On the one hand, religion, as Tillich demonstrated, is as unavoidable in culture as is an ultimate concern. On the other hand, all religion, as Geertz showed, has a cultural context; indeed, there is no understanding of anything outside a specific cultural context. Putting the hands together, religion as ultimate concern is, to borrow a phrase from Geertz (1983b), a “culturally constructed conceptual system” (p. ix). This essay employs the term “religio-cultural” in its title because the two concepts are inextricably bound to one another, and it is this inextricable binding that justifies Morgan’s call for dialogue.

A second question, as a follow-up the first, has to do with what such a dialogue could possibly achieve, and although different persons from different perspectives might argue for different possibilities, within the context of this essay it stands out that anthropology and religion, from within their respective fields of endeavor, each viewing the phenomenon of “humankind” from the vantage point of their own peculiar interests, can synergistically inform one another. Such a synergy is more than simple cooperation. It is the interaction of agents and ideas in such a way that the combined effort and effect is greater than the sum of the individual efforts and effects.

Geertz (1983a) provided a clue to how this synergistic dialogue might work in his essay “Local Knowledge: Fact and Law in Comparative Perspective,” where he differentiated between “what lawyers tend to call legal anthropology and anthropologists the anthropology of law…” (p. 168), and described the relationship of the two groups as one that is “so near and yet so far” (p. 168). One group, he said (quoting O.W. Holmes, Jr.), is concerned “to equip us with
‘what we want in order to appear before judges or...to keep...out of court’” (p. 168), while the other (quoting E.A. Hoebel quoting Clyde Kluckhohn) is concerned “with constructing a great mirror in which we can ‘look at [ourselves] in [our] infinite variety’” (Geertz’s brackets) (p. 168). If one makes a similar distinction between anthropology of religion and religious anthropology, then one may observe the task of the anthropologist doing the anthropology of religion as similar to that described above, i.e., “…constructing a great mirror” which reflects humankind’s “infinite variety” of religious thought and behavior, while the task of the theologian and philosopher of religion becomes equipping persons to adequately engage with religion in their particular times and places. Here, too, the anthropologist has a “so near and yet so far relationship” with the theologian and philosopher of religion, but a positive dialogue with a view to the nearness can bring the nearness nearer and render the farness less far. One may make the same observation about anthropology and religion that Geertz made about anthropology and law: they are both “practice minded professions...closely bound to special worlds...heavily dependent on special skills” (p. 168). And as Geertz viewed the “penetration of a juridical sensibility into anthropology” and “an ethnographic one into law” (p. 168) as desirable, one might also hope for the penetration of a religious sensibility into anthropology and an ethnographic one into religion. But Geertz also understood that, as synergistic as this might be for law and anthropology, it had not largely come about. Instead “a set of becalmed debates” (p. 168) had occurred, and the interaction had yielded mostly “ambivalence and hesitation” (p. 168). Here one may better understand Morgan’s call for dialogue between anthropology and religion, i.e., he understood that it had yet to occur on any large scale. And even today, while studies in the anthropology of religion are available at a number of schools, Geertz’s anthropology is influential in a variety of disciplines, and Tillich’s theology ranks high among scholars of religion; the specific dialogue for which Morgan called has largely still to happen.
Nevertheless, Morgan recognized that such a dialogue could be *meaningful*, a term which, in this essay as related to the possible dialogue Morgan suggested, carries full force the Merriam-Webster Online definition of each being relevant, significant, or suggestive to the other. Both anthropology and religion are directed toward making sense of human existence in order to achieve a better sense of the self, individually and corporately. The synergy described above is a product of a synthesis of perspective and method which brings about a more meaningful understanding of what *we* are about as well as what *they* are about, which facilitates newly relevant, significant, and suggestive understandings and approaches for how *we all* can be better at whatever it is that *we all* are about.

With the persons of this essay’s first section as foundations and with the above as a statement of purpose, this study first takes a look at the nature of culture; secondly examines how religion develops within culture; and thirdly views culture and religion together as, to quote John Morgan (2006a), “convergent *expressions of meaning*” (Morgan’s italics) (p. 26). Once it establishes these themes, it turns its attention to a discussion of Geertz’s “webs” metaphor, and lastly considers the potential for religio-cultural synergistic synthesis.

**The Nature of Culture**

John Morgan (2006b) described Clifford Geertz as “the leading American authority in the anthropological study of religion” (p. 107), and both Morgan and Geertz treated anthropology as, simply stated, “the analysis of culture” (pp. 109-110). Morgan quoted Geertz’s assertion that his concept of culture was “essentially a semiotic one” (p. 109), i.e., it “denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols” (p. 109). It is Geertz’s semiotic approach that ties his treatment of culture and religion to Paul Tillich’s work and underlies this essay’s task of delineating what it means to spin webs.

For Geertz (1973b) a symbol was: “…any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception—the
conception is the symbol’s meaning...” (p. 91). Compatibly, Tillich (1964d) defined a symbol as representing “something which is not itself, for which it stands and in the power and meaning of which it participates” (p. 56). In harmony with Geertz and Tillich, Morgan (2006c), as one may extract from his treatment of specifically religious symbols, treated a symbol as a “phenomenal expression” that both “produces” and is “the product of” a community’s various self-articulations whether “participational” or “verbal,” in either written or unwritten form; the focusing agent and “essentially the ultimate carrier” of the community’s composite of experience and expression, i.e., the way a community understands itself and declares its understanding (pp. 100-101). Like-mindedly, in this essay a symbol calls up and includes the entire worldview and ethos, both conscious and unconscious, associated with what it represents; and a symbol system is, to quote Geertz (1973b), “…one’s explanatory apparatus, the complex of received culture patterns …one has for mapping the empirical world…” (p. 100). As Morgan (2006b) put it, a symbol-system is expressive of “humankind’s quest for meaning” (p. 109), and as mentioned above he concurred with Geertz that “culture is historically transmitted as patterns of meaning which are embodied in a ‘complex of symbols’” (p. 109). Stated differently, the analysis of a culture is essentially an attempt to understand its meaning systems, and a study of the encounter of different cultures is essentially an examination of how divergent meaning systems interact.

To go a step further, for Geertz (1973b) symbols were “tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs” (p. 91); and he specifically mentioned among his examples “[t]he number 6, written, imagined, laid out as a row of stones, or even punched into the program tapes of a computer;…the Cross, talked about, visualized, shaped worriedly in air or fondly fingered at the neck” (p. 91); and Pablo Picasso’s 1937 painting “called ‘Guernica’” (p. 91), which Picasso painted after Nazi
Germany bombed the Republican stronghold town of Guernica in support of the Nationalist faction during the Spanish civil war. For Tillich (1964d), while he cautioned his readers that not everything is a symbol and the word “symbol” itself is open to misuse (pp. 54-56), “everything in reality can impress itself as a symbol” (p. 59); and he discussed how a nation’s flag points beyond itself to a greater reality (pp. 54-55) and how “artistic symbols” such as poetry, visual art, and music open up levels of reality “which can be opened up in no other way” (pp. 56-57). For Morgan (2006c), a symbol “is a multi-dimensional focusing of” [a] “myth-ritual complex in a phenomenal expression” (p. 101); a complex where “myth is verbalized ritual,” and “ritual is the enactment of myth” (p. 105; footnote 23). Here myths are stories which embody a community’s self-understanding and summon its particular perception of the external world and corresponding attitudes and values (Morgan, 2007, pp. 130,117, & 144), and rituals are re-enactments of the “self-aware” community’s myths (p. 139). In conformity with their ideas, in this essay a symbol mediates a level of self-understanding and conjures particular emotional responses, commitments, and behaviors in a way not otherwise possible as it transmits and reinforces a particular worldview and corresponding ethos; and a symbol system is an integrated arrangement of symbols.

Returning to Morgan’s (2006b) treatment of Geertz, one may also describe this “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in ‘a complex of symbols’” as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [humankind] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (p. 109). In other words, an examination of a culture is an examination of how people corporately “make sense of [their] experience” (p. 111). Morgan pointed out that one can correctly argue that “culture is meaning and meaning is hermeneutics” (Morgan’s italics) (p. 110), i.e., interpretation. To expand this statement, one may treat culture as how human persons interpret the world based on their experience in it, including their
contemplation of it. As Morgan (2006a) observed, this is a “shift in emphasis in culture analysis” away from culture as “learned human behaviour” or “the way of life of a group of people,” i.e., “the ‘doings’ of humanity,” toward “experiential meaningfulness” (pp. 18-19); or as he stated it another way, “Meaning as human experience is that which constitutes the *sine qua non* [essential condition] of culture…” (p. 19). He referenced Geertz’s belief that “[t]he drive to make sense out of experience…to give it form and order, is evidently as real and as pressing as the more familiar biological needs” (p. 27). Morgan has expressed his agreement with Geertz, that the imposition of form and order is fundamental to humankind, in his own treatment of culture. Culture for him is as old as humankind itself. In his 2007 book “*In the Beginning...*”, *The Paleolithic Origins of Religious Consciousness*, he discussed “Ideology and Behavior” as engendered by “possibility thinking,” i.e., they result from “ideas feeding imagination and attitudes growing under the light of considered opportunities” (pp. 41-42). Here thought and behaviour swirl together, the outcome of which is “the development of ideology” and “action by design” (p. 41). Morgan continued, “Memory and imagination fuse the past and the future into the present moment…” (p. 43). He said that it is in this conflation of “memory and imagination” and “ideology and action” that the “fundamentally human traits of a quest for rationality and the pursuit of a hope for the future” reside (p. 44). Here is interpretation of experience which gives birth to cultural symbols as expressions of the meaning of the world and one’s place in it. This gives definition to the group, and this definition is what one may understand as culture.

Stated another way, culture gains shape as “behaviours and ideologies,” “myths and rituals,” “worldview and ethos” (Morgan, 2007, p. 68) whirlpool into “a vortex” (p. 41) which spews out answers to life’s most pressing questions, and a group coalesces around these “truths” in which individuals share common values and practice a common life style. These “truths” are self-validating in the sense of a circular reference in which the group members’ experience
of the world and their thought pertaining to their experience declare their actions and notions that have developed out of their experience and thought to be correct ones.

Morgan amalgamated these processes into a definition of culture:

Culture is a complex of behaviors and ideologies consisting of rituals and myths which appeals to an *historico-temporal legitimacy* embodying a worldview and ethos addressing the verities of life and existence conveying a dynamic level of psycho/social reality which is self-validating to the individual and community (Morgan’s bold italics) (p. 68).

Diverse cultures are expressions of different interpretations of the world, and it is within the context of these cultures as symbol systems that the features that define them as distinct cultures, e.g., art, education, justice, religion, colloquial wisdom, and forms of reciprocity and power relations, take their peculiar shapes which both express and reinforce a group’s particular interpretation of its experience. This is humankind spinning its “webs of significance,” arranging each perception and expression within a cultural frame. The analysis of culture is an address to uncovering the meaning essential to and transmitted by symbol systems, and the next section treats religion as a prime example of such a system.

**The Development of Religion**

John Morgan drew from James Luther Adams “Introduction” to Paul Tillich’s *What Is Religion?* in describing Tillich as “primarily a philosopher of religion who understood his task to be to delineate a ‘philosophy of meaning’ which could engage ‘in dialogue with any historical religion…’ a consideration of man and his ‘relatedness to the Unconditional in terms of meaning’” (Morgan, 2006a, p. 19).
Morgan continued, “…Tillich combined a quest for a convergence of being and meaning in terms of a category called ‘meaning-reality,’ a term incorporating both the experience of meaning and its ground of Unconditionality” (p. 19). He then quoted Tillich from *What Is Religion?*, “Meaning is the common characteristic and the ultimate unity of the theoretical and the practical sphere of spirit, of scientific and aesthetic, of legal and social structures…” (Morgan, 2006a, p. 19) (Tillich, 1969, pp. 56-57); and observed that Tillich saw his first task as a philosopher of religion to be “an analysis of meaning itself” (Morgan, 2006a, p. 19) (Tillich, 1969, p. 57). Morgan pointed out that the complementary relationship of what humankind is in terms of its own existence and what humankind is in terms larger than itself was the driving force of Tillich’s philosophy (pp. 19-20).

According to Morgan (2006a), humankind’s quest to interpret, i.e., to make sense out of experience, is the point of convergence between Tillich and Geertz. He wrote, “Geertz has brought the term ‘meaning’ fully into anthropological parlance with a definition of culture as ‘an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols’…Geertz is striving throughout his writings upon religion and culture to express the dynamics of human expressions in ritual and symbol as demonstrative of the human quest for meaning” (p. 20).

Morgan (2006a), drawing from Geertz’s essay, “Religion as a Cultural System,” noted that for Geertz “a fundamental characteristic of religion is the address to the ‘problem of meaning’” (p. 22), a term which Geertz (1973b) borrowed from Max Weber (p. 104); but Morgan (2006a) went on to suggest that this is the “function” of religion (p. 22). He further observed that this “problem of meaning” implies the possibility of “meaninglessness,” i.e., “pointless existence” or “chaos” (p. 22), which Geertz defined as “a tumult of events” beyond the human capacity of interpretation (p. 22). Morgan then described how Geertz recognized at least three points at which it threatens humankind. These are at the limits of the human “analytic
capacities,” “powers of endurance,” and “moral insight,” i.e., “bafflement, suffering, and a sense of intractable ethical paradox” (p. 22). Put another way, these limits bespeak “the inescapability of ignorance, pain, and injustice” (p. 22). The “problem of meaning” is the recognition and perhaps the affirmation of these issues, “while simultaneously denying that these irrationalities are characteristic of the world as a whole” (p. 22). It is this “problem of meaning” that drives humankind toward religious expressions which humankind then applies in an attempt at resolution (p. 22).

Whereas culture is humankind’s attempt to make sense of its experience in terms of itself, religion is the same attempt by humankind in terms larger than itself. Stated differently, religion, like culture, attempts to make sense of events, but does so in a unique way as it looks beyond the temporal world for enlightenment, comfort, and fairness. Religion is one expression of culture and has the same overall task as culture understood as a whole. Thus Geertz (1973b) defined religion in anthropological terms (p. 90). Morgan quoted him, “Religion is (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, persuasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Morgan, 2006a, pp. 21-22).

But as noted above, religion functions within culture in a unique way, a theme on which Morgan also elaborated in his 2007 book “In the Beginning...”, The Paleolithic Origins of Religious Consciousness (pp. 45-65). Just as Morgan showed that culture is as old as humankind itself, he also established this for religion. He noted how the earliest human experience entailed “awe, wonder, and reverence” (p. 51), and suggested, “…in the light of our explorations into the emergence of the phenomenon of human consciousness, that the essence of religion is what the human community has decided to do with its experience of awe, wonder, and reverence and the manifestation of that decision constitutes the ingredients of a
religious system” (Morgan’s italics) (p. 51). Here religion embodies “the human inclination to muse upon awe, wonder, and reverence” (p. 51) which is inclusive of probing the unknown. One may also understand Geertz’s “problem of meaning” as fundamental to this human musing; and human encounter with bafflement, suffering, and moral paradox bound in same experience as awe, wonder, and reverence.

According to Morgan (2007), what makes religion unique is how it attempts to answer the questions generated by human existence, i.e., when humankind cannot find answers to its most difficult questions in terms of the natural world, it seeks “otherworldly” explanations. Religion arises at this point, and develops its particular structures within the context of culture as a whole. Thus Morgan supplied a definition of religion identical to his definition of culture with one exception, i.e., it “appeals to a transcendent legitimacy” (p. 51). He stated his definition as follows: “Religion is a complex of behaviors and ideologies consisting of rituals and myths which appeals to a transcendent legitimacy embodying a worldview and ethos addressing the verities of life and existence conveying a dynamic level of psycho/social reality which is self-validating to the individual and community” (Morgan’s bold italics) (pp. 51-52).

This essay’s focus in this section is on how religion functions as the “other-worldly” aspect of a culture seeking to make human experience intelligible, how “other-worldliness” is in some sense common to all cultures, and how this “other-worldly” quality supplies distinct interpretative flavors to the world’s various peoples. Moreover, as cognitive, aesthetic, and moral systems take particular shapes within each culture according to that culture’s particular interpretation of its experience, so they operate within the religious structures that participate in the culture as a whole. Humankind spins religion as integral to its cultural webs.

Even though there may be little, if any, separation of the “religious” from the “mundane” in some cultures, and while there may be a great deal of separation of religious ideas and institutions
from everyday life in others, religion is a culturally generated perspective from which to interpret the world and organize life. The next section addresses more fully the nature of religion as common to human experience and the consequent relationship of religion to culture.

“Convergent Expressions of Meaning”
(Morgan, 2006a, p. 26)

In his essay, “Religion as a Dimension in Man’s Spiritual Life,” Paul Tillich (1964c) pondered what happens when one brings up the subject of religion. He said to speak of it is to invite inquiry from both Christian theologians and secular scientists, and each group will formulate their questions a bit differently. The former, he observed, “will ask whether” one considers religion “a creative element of the human spirit rather than a gift of divine revelation” (p. 3), while the latter “will ask whether” one considers it “a lasting quality of the human spirit instead of an effect of changing psychological and sociological conditions” (p. 3). Should one answer that it is “as aspect of man’s spiritual life” or that it is “a necessary aspect of man’s spiritual life,” both the theologians and the secular scientists “will turn away” but in “opposite directions” (p. 3), i.e., they both turn away from the same answer but in favour of different conclusions. Differently stated, the theologians question whether religion is something “given to” humankind “which does not come from” humankind and that “may stand against” humankind, while the social scientists raise the issue of whether or not religion is a “transitory” stage “of human development” (pp. 3-4).

Tillich pointed out that the theologians and the social scientists who criticize “the belief that religion is an aspect of the human spirit” (p. 4) have something in common, i.e., they “define religion as man’s relation to divine beings” (p. 4). For Tillich, theologians who insist that God is “a thing beside others within the universe of existing things” (p. 5) make a losing argument, and scientists who believe they
can refute religion by showing “that there is no evidence whatsoever for the assumption that such a being exists” (p. 5) do little more than force theologians to reconsider their position. Tillich both challenged an understanding of God as “a highest being” and affirmed “the validity of… religion as an aspect of the human spirit” (p. 5).

Tillich wrote, “When we say that religion is an aspect of the human spirit, we are saying that if we look at the human spirit from a special point of view, it presents itself to us as religious” (p. 5). He continued, [from this point of view] “religion is not a special function of man’s spiritual life, but it is the dimension of depth in all of its functions” (pp. 5-6). James C. Livingston and Francis Schüßler Fiorenza (2006) put it this way, “According to Tillich, religion is not a separate endowment (emphasis added) of human life that can be set side by side with our rational, moral, and aesthetic faculties. Rather, it is the depth dimension in all of our cultural and spiritual life” (p. 141). Tillich (1964c) showed how religion can manifest itself in humankind’s moral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, but declared that one should not equate it to them (pp. 6-7). Instead, as he again emphasized, “Religion is the dimension of depth in all of them. Religion is the aspect of depth in the totality of the human spirit” (p. 7).

With reference to “depth,” Tillich said, “It means that the religious aspect points to that which is ultimate, infinite, unconditional in man’s spiritual life. Religion, in the largest and most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern” (pp. 7-8). “Ultimate concern,” he continued, “is manifest in all the creative functions of the human spirit” (p. 8), e.g., it is “manifest in the moral sphere as the unconditional seriousness of the moral demand,…in the realm of knowledge as the passionate longing for ultimate reality,” and “…in the aesthetic function as the infinite desire to express ultimate meaning” (p. 8).

To understand religion as depth in human experience is to understand it as fundamental to human existence. When one is experiencing depth, that person is interpreting ultimate things,
seeking answers to questions that have no apparent or easy answers. The answers are beyond mundane, day to day, human experience. In fact, it is humankind’s day to day experience that gives rise to the questions. The questions address such issues as why there is a humankind, why humankind is as it is, why the larger world is as it is, why human persons must die, and what happens to human persons when they die.

Ultimate questions as indicators of ultimate concerns rise in the course of human evolution. To restate John Morgan’s words, religion is humankind’s reaction to and participation in the deep experience “of awe, wonder, and reverence.” Tillich (1964c) put it thus, “Religion is the substance, the ground, and the depth of man’s spiritual life” (p. 8). Attempts to answer life’s deepest questions in temporal terms do not satisfy humankind. If they did, there would be no need to seek other explanations. Therefore, humankind looks to what Morgan called “a transcendent legitimacy,” i.e., an “other-worldly” source, for the best answers possible.

The link between culture and religion is humankind’s drive to interpret, to seek meaning, to make sense out of the world and to understand its place in it. Morgan understood that it is precisely at this point that a proper conversation can take place between anthropology and theology. Religion as depth in culture assists culture’s task of interpreting human experience; but as Morgan’s definitions clearly show, culture’s questions and answers are temporally based while religion’s questions and answers are rooted in the mystery of every aspect of human existence. As Morgan (2006a) has written of Tillich, “…neither religion nor culture can be spoken of in the absence of the other, for they both convey meaning, granted the difference in direction and in level of intensity” (p. 24).

As Tillich (1964b) stated in the “Foreword” to his book Theology of Culture, “This [religious] dimension…is never absent in cultural creations even if they show no relation to religion in the narrower sense of the word” (p. v). Tillich (1964a) recognized that both religious elements and secular elements may strive to establish
themselves independently, and developed his “existential concept of religion” as an address to that issue as it closes “the gap between the sacred and the secular realm” (p. 41). Nonetheless, from his point of view, “…there is no cultural creation without an ultimate concern expressed in it” (p. 42). As Tillich (1994) concisely stated in his presentation which addressed Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions, “Religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life” (p. 3).

It is significant that religion’s answers, because they are generated by and within a particular culture, will always find expression in terms of the culture which generates them. Religion is the plumbing of the depths of human existence from within its particular cultural milieu. Tillich (1964a) concluded, “Every religious act, not only in organized religion, but also in the most intimate movement of the soul, is culturally formed” (p. 42). This is “culture creating a universe of meaning” not “in the empty space of mere validity,” but “as the actualization of what is potential in the bearer of the spirit—in man [humankind]” (Tillich, 1967, p. 3:84). Religion is fundamental to cultural webs, and always finds expression in the terms of the culture that “spins” it.

This essay now turns its attention to Geertz’s metaphorical image of the web in order to establish a perspective from which to discuss how Morgan’s proposed conversation between Geertz’s anthropology and Tillich’s theology can produce a forceful argument for religio-cultural synergistic synthesis.

The Geertzian Web

This essay’s opening section quoted Geertz’s assertion that his concept of culture was “webs of significance” which humankind has itself spun and in which it is suspended. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss Geertz’s various depictions of culture, this
famous and ubiquitous statement, which provides such a striking image, requires some explanation.

Geertz’s “webs” metaphor is largely understood as a reference to a sort of arachnidan construction, and is used as such across a broad spectrum of human endeavor including an American soldier (Linam, 2013) writing about his initiation into his military unit, a “black metal” blogger in a treatment of “black metal” as a culture (Valter, 2006), both Wiki Answers (Answers, 2014) and Yahoo! Answers (Yahoo Answers, n.d.) in asking their characteristic questions, an associate professor in his weblog who contemplates a problem with it as such (Thompson, 2010), and persons involved with organizational diagnostics of management teams and departments (Potter, 2010). Moreover, as passing or near passing remarks in a 2011 collection of essays (Alexander, Smith, & Norton) which attempts “to log and critically evaluate [Geertz’s] achievement over a range of disciplines and issues” (Preface, p. xiii), University of Southern California Professor Paul Lichterman (2011) referred to Geertz’s metaphor as “the spider’s web of culture” (p. 79), and Princeton Professor Peter Brooks (2011) referred to it as “the image of the spider’s web,” and remarked about “…the spider itself as spinning webs of meaning out of its own bodily substances…” (p. 11).

There is, however, a dilemma in accepting this Geertzian metaphor too straightforwardly and uncritically as an arachnidan edifice or pressing its application as such too far. Specifically, while Geertz (1973c) in his essay “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” declared his concept of culture as humankind spinning and being suspended in its own “webs of significance” (p. 5); in his essay “Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali” he proclaimed the “spider’s web” unsuitable as a model for cultural organization (1973a, p. 407). Although this latter essay was first published in 1966 (Mörth & Fröhlich, 2008), it was included in his 1973 book The Interpretation of Cultures along with “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” which was specifically written for the book. In “Person, Time, and Conduct in
“Bali” Geertz wrote, “The appropriate image, if one must have images, of cultural organization, is neither the spider’s web nor the pile of sand” (p. 407), ideas traceable to Franz Boas (1858-1942) and his students (Fox, 1985, pp. 190-191); and according to University of Chicago Professor Richard Shweder in his 2007 paper, “The Resolute Irresolution of Clifford Geertz,” Geertz reiterated this thought in an exchange with Paul Kay, whom Shweder described as “a rigorous comparative ethnographer” (p. 198) whose “interest was in universal generalizations about the evolution of color terms in all human languages” (p. 198), who raised the issue of “the systematicity of culture” (p. 198) at a Social Science Research Council conference in the early 1980s (pp. 198-199).

Geertz (1973a) made this statement in “Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali” in the context of recognizing that in any culture there are not only primary cultural patterns but also “patterns counteractive [“in an un-Hegelian way”] to primary ones” which “exist as subdominant but nonetheless important themes…” (p. 406). He also observed that “…beyond this sort of natural counterpoint there are also simple, unbridged discontinuities between certain major themes themselves,” and “[n]ot everything is connected to everything else with equal directness; not everything plays immediately into or against everything else” (p. 407). “The notion that culture is a seamless web,” he called a fallacious idea (p. 407). He wrote, “Systems do not need to be exhaustively interconnected to be systems… the problem of cultural analysis is as much a matter of determining independencies as interconnections, gulfs as well as bridges” (p. 407). It is at this point in his discussion that Geertz said that “neither the spider web nor the pile of sand” is an “appropriate image…of cultural organization.”

“Cultural organization,” Geertz declared, “is rather more like the octopus, whose tentacles are in large part separately integrated, neurally quite poorly connected with one another and with what in the octopus passes for a brain, and yet who nonetheless manages both to get around and preserve himself, for a while anyway, as a viable if
somewhat ungainly entity” (pp. 407-408). Here according to Geertz one is better justified in viewing cultural organization as an octopoid’s neurophysiological arrangement than as a spider’s web. If Geertz changed his mind by the time he wrote “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” thus intending a “spider’s web” metaphor in that essay, he certainly was not reluctant to include his statement about the unsuitability of the spider’s web as a model for cultural organization made in “Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali,” unchanged, in the same book; nor was he hesitant to reiterate the thought at a Social Services Research Council conference in the early 1980s.

So then how is one to understand Geertz’s concept of culture as humankind “suspended in webs of significance” it has itself spun? Firstly, one must understand that the spinner is not the spider, and secondly, that the webs are not as clearly defined as are arachnidan constructions. Rather, the spinner is humankind, or to use John Morgan’s (2006b) expression, “the meaning-seeking animal” (p. 107); and the web of meaning is an “elusive and ill-defined pseudoentity” (Geertz, 1973c, p. 29), a notion which John Morgan (2006a) in his 1977 essay joined to Geertz’s “concept of culture” statement (p. 21). When Geertz (1973b) verbally pictorialized culture his focus was on how, as already mentioned in this essay’s third section, his “culture concept…denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [humankind] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (p. 89). The human animal decides what life means and what are proper attitudes and behaviors; and to once again draw from Morgan (2006b), the web depicts that which “no society exists without” as problematic as it might be to describe metaphorically: “a conception of order in the world or of system in experience” (p. 111).

To take the image a step further, Geertz (1973a) wrote that some tend to see the relationship of meaningful cultural forms as
“consisting of some sort of intrinsic affinity for one another (or disaffinity)” (p. 404). Certain persons, he continued, speak of “cultural integration” as “a harmony of meaning, cultural change as an instability of meaning, and cultural conflict as an incongruity of meaning...” (p. 404). “[T]he implication,” he explained, is that “the harmony, the instability, or the incongruity are properties of meaning itself, as, say, sweetness is a property of sugar or brittleness of glass” (p. 404). He pointed out that one cannot perform “a cultural assay” on “symbolic forms” “to discover their harmony content, their stability ratio, or their index of incongruity; one can only look to see if the forms in question are in fact coexisting, changing, or interfering with one another...which is like tasting sugar to see if it is sweet or dropping a glass to see if it is brittle...” (pp. 404-405). He said, “When we look for the constituents of the harmony, the instability, or the incongruity, we are unable to find them resident in that of which they are presumably properties” (p. 404). “The reason for this,” he explained, “is that meaning is not intrinsic in the objects, acts, processes, and so on, which bear it but... [it is] imposed upon them” by “men [human persons] living in society” (p. 405). Geertz concluded that one must therefore probe for “the nature of cultural integration, cultural change, or cultural conflict...in the experiences of individuals and groups of individuals, as under the guidance of symbols, they perceive, feel, reason, judge, and act” (p. 405). Here one might add that the variety of webs spun by various peoples often have divergent emphases, and the processes of integration, change, and conflict may be extremely difficult to determine, describe, and understand cross-culturally.

Geertz (1983a) observed that the world is indeed “a various place,” but nevertheless recognized that there is “much to be gained...by confronting that grand actuality...” (p. 234). He concluded, “The primary question, for any cultural institution anywhere...is not whether everything is going to come seamlessly together or whether, contrariwise, we are all going to persist sequestered in our separate prejudices” (p. 234). It has to do, he said,
with whether human persons can “imagine principled lives they can practicably lead” (p. 234).

It is from this perspective that this essay concludes with a consideration of how the Geertz-Tillich dialogue for which John Morgan called can provide sound anthropological and theological grounds for religio-cultural synergistic synthesis.

Religio-Cultural Synergistic Synthesis

As this essay’s fifth section discusses, Paul Tillich (1964c) treated religion in its broad sense as “the dimension of depth” (p. 7) in all human cultural and spiritual life. He recognized that both religious elements and secular elements may strive to establish themselves independently, and developed his existential concept of religion as an address to that issue because it closed “the gap between the sacred and the secular realm” (Tillich, 1964a, p. 41). Because religion is a dimension of depth, secularization does not preclude its operation. Awareness of or reference to religious values notwithstanding, religion according to Tillich is always operative and inescapable.

Tillich (1964c) specifically mentioned three activities, which he called “spiritual functions” (p. 6), operative in humankind: 1) “the moral function,” 2) “the cognitive function,” and 3) “the aesthetic function” (pp. 6-7). He understood what it meant for religion in its narrow sense to become secularly banished from these dimensions, but concluded that religion in its broad and true sense actually dwells in the depth of all of them.

As this essay’s fifth section also notes, by depth Tillich (1964c) meant, “…the religious aspect points to that which is ultimate, infinite, unconditional in man’s spiritual life. Religion, in the largest and most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern” (pp. 7-8). He said that “in the moral sphere,” religion shows itself in “the unconditional seriousness of the moral demand” (p. 8); in the cognitive sphere, religion “is manifest as the passionate longing for ultimate reality” (p. 8); and in aesthetics, religion presents itself as
“the infinite desire to express ultimate meaning” (p. 8). Because this is an escapable dimension of depth, secularization cannot exclude its operation.

As this essay’s fourth section discusses, Clifford Geertz stated ultimate concern in other terms. He observed that humankind has “a problem of meaning,” and this “problem of meaning” is common to all cultures. On the one hand chaos threatens human persons at three points: “at the limits of [human] analytic capacities, at the limits of [human] powers of endurance”, and at the point that human persons recognize “intractable ethical paradox,” i.e., “ignorance, pain, and injustice” (Morgan, 2006a, p. 22). On the other hand, humankind does not want to accept these “irrationalities” as “characteristic of the world as a whole,” hence, the “problem of meaning” (p. 22).

As John Morgan (2006a) observed in the 1970s, Tillich and Geertz said much the same thing albeit not exactly the same thing, and “the distinction is crucial” (p. 29) for avoiding a lapse of the respective disciplines into “competitive interpretations” (p. 29). Geertz, Morgan explained, “restricted his observational analysis…to the cultural manifestations” (p. 23), while Tillich made no such restriction but felt “a professional imperative not only to speak of religion and culture as meaning systems but to plumb for their ground of being…” (p. 23). “Geertz,” he wrote, “lays no claim of competency in speaking to the ‘basis upon which belief rests;’” rather, he “intentionally focused his attention upon the problem of meaning as it is expressed in and through the cultural symbol systems of human society” (p. 23). By contrast, Morgan observed that Tillich, with his awareness that all “meanings are connected in a total meaning system which legitimizes each separate meaning as they totally reside in the Unconditioned Meaning” (p. 20), “has gone beyond (emphasis added)...anthropological analysis of religion and culture as meaning systems” (p. 23). In Morgan’s view Geertz with his semiotic approach to culture and its analysis has “set the stage from an anthropological perspective for a dialogue with theology...” (p. 23), and if Geertz has “set the [anthropological] stage,” Tillich with his unique approach to
culture and religion “has written the [theological] prologue” (p. 23). Here is the penetration of a religious sensibility into anthropology and an ethnographic one into religion; i.e., the introduction of a strong humanizing element into religion since all religion is culturally formed—not simply an explanation of why people behave as they do, but a quest to understand how people view the world and their place in it and give expression to that understanding; and an infusion of a philosophically defensible unconditional ground of meaning into anthropology since no culture is devoid of ultimate concern and because ultimate issues drive human persons to religious beliefs and expressions.

But in addition to some measure of difference, some measure of congruity is also necessary for meaningful dialogue. Accordingly, to reverse order the statement above, while Geertz and Tillich did not say exactly the same thing, they said much the same thing. What Tillich expressed in terms of depth in humankind’s moral, cognitive, and aesthetic functions, Geertz expressed in terms of humankind’s fundamental address to ignorance, pain, and injustice. While recognizing an interrelatedness and overlap of function, one may correlate Tillich’s depth in the moral aspect of the human spirit to Geertz’s address to injustice, the depth in Tillich’s cognitive aspect of the human spirit to Geertz’s address to ignorance, and the depth in Tillich’s aesthetic aspect of the human spirit to Geertz’s address to the limits of human endurance. This illustrates the possible union of sound theology and sound anthropology.

The particulars of how different cultures address these concerns, the specifics of how no culture is ever static in its resolution to the problem of meaning, notions of peaks and troughs in the movement of the world’s cultures, and practical examples of these correlations with the resultant synergistic synthesis are subjects for future essays. Important for this essay is the recognition that the decisive test of the desirability and success of such a dialogue as Morgan proposed is the practical address to human dignity and need, and the recognition that religio-cultural synergistic synthesis springs from the fact that all
human persons share common issues at the most fundamental level of life even though they deal with them in different ways.

Paul Tillich and Clifford Geertz, considered separately, provide a model for synergistic synthesis. Both stand in long traditions within their respective fields of expertise. Neither developed his ideas in a vacuum. Their insights were not solely the product of their own unique genius, as remarkable as it was; rather, their ideas were shaped by and through their interaction with a long history of influences, both positive and negative, both within and without their respective fields of endeavor. The forerunners were integral to their work. Moreover, the work of Tillich and that of Geertz can combine to furnish the basis for a further synergistic synthesis of ideas and methods; and just as theology, represented by Paul Tillich writing as a theologian and a philosopher of religion, and anthropology, represented by Clifford Geertz writing as an anthropologist with an interest in religion, can, as Morgan has demonstrated, synergistically converse; so can the world’s cultures find common ground for meaningful conversation.

This synthesis is not the product of a thesis-antithesis conflict of cultures, even though cultures do often find themselves at odds and a sort of conflict-based synthesis may occur. Rather, it is one born out of the harmony of a common human quest for meaning which is particularly apparent in the address to fundamental human need. It then follows that this synergy is not primarily characterized by a constantly progressive upward improvement engendered by repeated thesis-antithesis collisions. Instead it is one brought about by the positive integration of diverse ideas and practices for the purpose of doing good.

In a globalized world where people from different cultural and religious backgrounds, each group with its own particular interconnected systems of understanding and expression, i.e., webs of meaning, are continually drawn into closer contact; it becomes increasingly imperative that every group develop a respect for the traditions and beliefs of others. This does not require an apology for
or abandonment of one’s own culture or religion, but it does necessitate respect for other worldviews, attitudes, and practices; empathy with others at the most fundamental levels of human experience; a readiness to address human need in practical ways; and a joint will and activity for peace and understanding. To this end sound theology and sound anthropology can unite for the realization of the synergistic potential resident in the synthesis of cultures—the spinning of broader, deeper, and stronger webs of significance.

References


Clergy Stress and Satisfaction in the Workplace

A Comparative Study of Four Christian Traditions

John H. Morgan

Over a period of several years I wrote a series of books on various aspects of Christian ministry called *Studies in Ecclesiastical Sociology* (Morgan, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 2001) in connection with my teaching duties in the theology summer program of Oxford University. One of those studies, *Scholar, Priest, and Pastor: Ministry Priorities Among Clergy Today* (a study of stress and satisfaction in the workplace for Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal, and Catholic clergy) (Morgan, 2001) drew a great deal of attention owing to the empirical nature of the study. Whereas Church officials are often satisfied with speculating about problems and their presumed solutions, and in this particular case the problems related to clergy stress, I have always found as a social scientist that it is better to ask than to guess. Two criticisms of the Church officials’ *modus operandi*, I felt, should be addressed. First, their tendency to speculate about a hypothesis (instead of collecting the data) and the presumption of truth (the false notion that what we “perceive” to be the truth “is” the truth) (Proeschold-Bell et. al. 2012a). When dealing with human reactions and emotions, it is not the truth one should seek but what the reacting person “perceives” to be truth for it is on the basis of the perception that the individual reacts and not what is
absolutely the truth. Social and behavioral scientists are never happy with either of these reductionistic tendencies, where the first one dismisses fact with prejudice and the second one presumes perception to be synonymous with the truth.

Since we will be looking at both stress and satisfaction, a brief comment about the definitional framework of these terms is important here (Morgan, 2012a). In our study, the use of the word stress was related to the “disparity” between the clergy person’s valuation assessment of duties and that of the faith community being served as perceived by the clergy person. Where there was a disparity between valuation of a particular duty or activity, we have labeled that “stress” and the situation a stress inducer. Where there is a conspicuous congruence of valuation assessment between the clergy person and his/her perception of the faith community, we have labeled that “satisfaction” and the situation a satisfaction inducer. According to Richard Lazarus, the pioneering researcher in stress back in the 1960s, “stress arises when individuals perceive that they cannot adequately cope with the demands being made on them or with threats to their well-being” (Lazarus, 1966). A decade later, Cox pointed out in his research that “stress can only be sensibly defined as a perceptual phenomenon arising from a comparison between the demand on the person and his or her ability to cope. An imbalance in this mechanism, when coping is important, gives rise to the experience of stress, and to the stress response” (Cox, 1978). Eventually, Lazarus was joined by Folkman in the 1980s suggesting simply that “stress results from an imbalance between demands and resources” (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Finally and more recently, Palmer has suggested that “stress is the psychological, physiological and behavioral response by an individual when they perceive a lack of equilibrium between the demands placed upon them and their ability to meet those demands, which, over a period of time, leads to ill-health” (Palmer, 1989). As must be recognized, there is great need for more sustained and in-depth analysis of the particular health issues affecting the African American clergy as indicated in two
recent studies (Carter-Edwards, et. al. 2012; and Stansbury and Schumacher, 2008).

So, to get at what the clergy in these four traditions perceived to be truth about the situation and circumstances of ministry, I simply asked them a series of fact-finding questions, thereby sidestepping the dangers of speculation and avoiding the pitfalls of mistaking perception for truth. One thousand clergy in each of the four traditions, namely, Methodist(M), Lutheran(L), Catholic(C), and Episcopal(E), were asked to answer fifteen questions, carefully constructed according to the standard rules of research instrument design set forth by the social sciences. The data were collected, sorted, analyzed, and summarized in the book mentioned above. The driving motivation was to gather data based on clergy responses from which, then, conclusions about stress and satisfaction in the workplace could be reasonably drawn. Rather than having Church officials speculate about what they thought might be the character and cause of stress experienced by the clergy in the workplace, this study asked the clergy themselves to provide answers leading to a clearer understanding of the roots of stress as well as points of satisfaction in their actual ministry. Also, rather than ask members of the congregations what they thought and how they felt, the clergy themselves were asked what they thought and how they felt. On both counts, asking questions of the clergy and identifying their own perceptions of their situation, we believe this study came closer to actually understanding the nature of stress and satisfaction among the clergy far better than all of the speculative books by armchair Church officials could ever provide.

In this data-based analysis of clergy stress and satisfaction in the workplace, our interest is in identifying points of particular interest and relevance to the topic of stress within the profession of ministry resulting from a perceived conflict between what the clergy assess to be of value in their work compared to what they perceived their faith communities’ perception of valued ministry functions. The justification for this interest is the empirically validated reality of the
exponential rise in health problems being encountered by the clergy today at a rate never before seen in American society (Proeschold-Bell et. al. 2012b). Heart attacks, diabetes, strokes, and stress are higher among the clergy under 40 years of age than in any other professional group and the numbers continue to rise (Stewart-Sicking, 2012). Couple that with the disturbing rate of “clergy burnout” such that individuals who have spent years in training for the ministry are, in some instances, staying in the profession of ministry less than five years after which they drop out of the ministry (and not a few leave the faith-community entirely). Certainly, any concerned individual can see the value of studying the phenomenon of clergy health, both physical and emotional, to get at the root causes of this abandonment of one’s profession.

Throughout and in deference to time and space, I will abbreviate references to “average” numbers within the four traditions of Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, and Episcopal by using M, L, C, and E. Of the four thousand randomly selected clergy surveyed from a national data-base, one thousand in each of the four traditions, the average age was M=46, L=48, C=56, and E=53. Male gender was M=80%, L=98%, C=100%, and E=94%. Caucasian ethnicity was M=95%, L=96%, C=94%, and E=100%. Those holding “advanced degrees” beyond the credential required for ordination were M=32%, L=38%, C=58%, and E=22%. It should be emphasized here that in a future study, both women and non-Caucasian clergy should be studied but in the data used for this study there were relatively meager numbers representing these two specific groupings of clergy. Another variable which might prove relevant in the study of stress among clergy is that of rural parishes versus urban parishes. Naturally, there is much yet to be learned here.

In addition to the biographical data, the survey made inquiries regarding the actual clock-time spent discharging these fifteen specifically designated clergy functions during the average work week. Keep in mind that the actual “truth” is not being sought here, but rather what the clergy person “perceived” to be the truth about
time allocations, for it is the perception rather than the factual truth which determines the clergy person’s assessment of time spent discharging his/her duties. In the interest of efficiency, I will abbreviate the fifteen questions and beside each indicate the tradition and time reportedly spent on each. Subsequently, we will report the “stress” and “satisfaction” assessments based on the disparity between what the clergy person perceived his/her “time valuation” to be versus what they perceived the parish’s “time valuation” to be. Here, most decidedly, is the basis for determining stress in the workplace, namely, the breadth of difference between what the clergy “thinks” is important versus what they perceive the parish to “think” is important.

**ACTIVITIES** of the clergy questioned and reported (hours reportedly spent)

1. Preparing the Sunday Homily
   
   M=6.5   L=7   C=4.5   E=8.5

2. Studying/reading major theologians of the day.
   
   M=2.25   L=2.5   C=2.5   E=2.5

   
   M=3.75   L=3   C=2.75   E=3.5

4. Serving as a spokesperson of authority for the teachings of the Church.
   
   M=2.5   L=2.75   C=4   E=2.25

5. Functioning as a valued and respected intellectual within the life of the parish.
   
   M=3.75   L=3.75   C=4.75   E=3.75

6. Leading the congregation in public worship.
   
   M=3   L=3   C=8.25   E=2.5

7. Presiding over the Eucharist/Communion.
   
   M=1   L=2   C=8.25   E=3.75
8. Exercising “sacramental” functions of ministry such as hearing confessions, baptizing, absolutions, anointing the sick, etc. (excluding Eucharistic celebrations).
   \[ M=3 \quad L=2.5 \quad C=4.5 \quad C=3.25 \]

9. Functioning as a spiritual Director to members of the parish.
   \[ M=4.5 \quad L=3.75 \quad C=3.25 \quad E=2.75 \]

10. Exercising discipline according to the canons of the Church including counseling as relates to discipline.
    \[ M=1.25 \quad L=1.5 \quad C=2.5 \quad E=1.75 \]

11. Involved in individual and family pastoral counseling sessions.
    \[ M=4 \quad L=3.25 \quad C=3.25 \quad E=3.25 \]

12. Involved in social activities within the life of the parish itself.
    \[ M=4.25 \quad L=3 \quad C=3.5 \quad E=3.25 \]

13. Involved in social activities within the life of the outside community.
    \[ M=3 \quad L=2.75 \quad C=2.5 \quad E=2.75 \]

14. Addressing within the public forum social, moral, and political issues of the day within the life of the community.
    \[ M=2 \quad L=1.75 \quad C=2.5 \quad E=2 \]

15. Serving the administration of the parish.
    \[ M=6.75 \quad L=5.5 \quad C=6.5 \quad E=6.5 \]

Note: What is interesting even before we commence a question-by-question analysis is the realization that among the Protestant clergy \((M,L,E)\), 1. And 15., i.e., sermon preparation and church administration, constitute the primary time-allocations whereas with the Catholic clergy \((C)\), 6. And 7., i.e., public worship and the celebration of the Eucharist, consumed the greatest among of weekly time.

SUMMARY OF REPORTED WEEKLY HOURS SPENT DISCHARGING DUTIES
   \[ M=50 \quad L=48 \quad C=63 \quad E=52 \]
Of course, the tendency here, which must be avoided at one’s own peril, is to engage in a simplistic “comparison” of various traditions with an eye towards determining “who is better,” “who works harder,” “what is really most important,” etc., etc., etc. This, certainly, will not do. What was the original purpose in this empirical study in the first place was to determine what the clergy in each tradition report to be how they spend their time “in relationship to” how they think the faith-community they serve wish them to spend their time. Here is the core of the stress-inducing phenomenon! When a clergy person thinks that his/her time is best spent doing “A” when he/she thinks that the parish both values “A” little but wishes the clergy person to be engaged in “B” which, in turn, the clergy person values less than “A,” here is the center of the storm creating stress (Wells, et. al. 2012). When what I wish to do (because it is how I define what it means for me to be a clergy person) comes into direct conflict with what I perceive my faith-community wishes me to be doing, therein lies the root cause of clergy stress. When both what the clergy wishes to do and the faith-community likewise wishes them to do are in sync, when they match, there is the core of “satisfaction” in the workplace for the clergy person. And, contrary to the many speculative works published by armchair Church officials, identifying these points of “stress” and “satisfaction” is not difficult! What might be difficult is to move the armchair officials off their speculations and onto the facts. Let us try to do it and see what happens.

Using 100% as the total possible response, the assessment of value attributed to each of the fifteen “activities” has been measured for both the clergy and the parish, remembering that the parish’s assessment of value is determined by the “clergy perception” of the parish’s assessment. In other words, if the clergy perceive their parish to wish them to spend more time studying Scripture, it really doesn’t matter what the “truth of the matter is” (if such could even be determined by a survey of the parish itself) (cf. McCabe, et. al. 2007). What is important for stress-induction is the fact that the clergy
person “perceives” the parish to have such a desire. So, the “clergy value assessment” of each of the fifteen activities is compared to the “parish value assessment” of each activity. Where there is a 20% or more “variance” in the clergy assessment versus the parish assessment, we have called that a “stress-inducer.” Where there is less than 20% variance, we have called that a “satisfaction-inducer” (Wilson, et. al., 2007). (Again, the book goes into considerable detail regarding each of these “stress and satisfaction-inducing” activities but here we will simply summarize the findings.)

STRESS-INDUCERS (common to all and distinct to each tradition)

In the area of commonly experienced stress-inducing situations within all four traditions, there are three which stand out, namely, (1) the study of Scripture, (2) involvement in the social life of the parish, and (3) addressing social, moral, and political issues. All four denominations more or less generate stress over each of these three activities and in all three, without exception, it is the laity who lace a low ranking of importance on them, while the clergy, across the board, place a high mark of importance. That stress is generated, and that conflict necessarily exists, is clearly borne out by the data. Distinctive rather than common stress-inducing situations to each of the denominations has proven more interesting and telling. Among the Catholics, there is only one clearly distinct instance of a stress-creating situation, and that is over the issue of the pastor spending time studying contemporary theology. It should be mentioned here that the Episcopal clergy share this particular experience (Stewart-Sicking, 2012). That the Catholic laity think little of this enterprise, whereas priests think it quite important to engage in such study, calls for a concerted effort on the part of the clergy to inform and instruct the laity on the meaning and value of such study and its significance to the ongoing vitality of the priests’ ministry. A distinctive stress-inducer within the Lutheran tradition has to do with the pastor’s involvement in the social life of the outside community, an activity
greatly devalued by the laity but much valued by the clergy. Again, more instruction of the parish on the meaning and value of this activity as it is a manifestation of the pastor’s role to evangelize and witness to the faith in the world is obviously required here, and, using a different tact, to challenge the parish to be less selfish with the pastor’s time and more giving and generous towards the community. This Lutheran tendency to see the pastor as “for the parish” rather than “for the world” has been a consistent finding in this study.

Four stress-inducing situations we have found to be distinctively Methodist in character are, namely, (1) the pastor as intellectual, (2) presiding at Holy Communion, (3) ecclesiastical discipline, and (4) administration. In every instance, the stress is created due to the laity’s low estimation of these particular forms of ministry and the pastor’s high valuation of their importance in the overall exercise of ministry. That the intellectual flavor of the clergy has not been a distinctive characteristic of the Methodist tradition is well established, but the pastor is today called upon more than ever to display an awareness of the affairs of the world and to demonstrate an acquaintance with the flow of public information. This trend and its importance must somehow be conveyed to the parish such that the laity become supportive of the pastor’s desire to participate in the intellectual activity of the community. Methodist clergy’s low showing as to holding advanced degrees in theology and ministry (only the Episcopal clergy are lower) seems to be reflective of this tendency within the tradition to down-play scholarship generally.

The devaluation of the time spent in presiding at the Lord’s Table on the part of the Methodist laity, while the clergy find themselves increasingly valuing this activity highly, might be suggestive of the still strong “Protestant” notion about the Eucharist among the laity and a growing sense of “catholicity” regarding Communion among the clergy. Bringing Holy Communion into the central arena of the parish’s worship life within Methodism is a recent development and has been initiated by the clergy rather than the laity. Whereas the sermon seems to be the focus of the congregation (72% rank it high),
the Eucharist seems to be the increasing focus of the clergy (74% rank it high).

Another stress for Methodist clergy is the difference of opinion with respect to the meaning and nature of the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline, and this problem will not go away, since the core of the problem centers around the problematic of a balance between *sola Scriptura* and *personal piety*. These two emphases within the tradition preclude any strong sense of the meaningfulness and, indeed, rightfulness of discipline of any kind being administered by the clergy upon the laity. Finally, the matter of administration will be an enduring struggle between the laity (concerned with local parish life) and the clergy (concerned with the management of the institutional church locally and nationally).

**SATISFACTION-INDUCERS** (common to all and distinct to each tradition)

This component of our study naturally proved the most pleasing for the identification of causes of satisfaction within the parish on the part of the clergy is, indeed, a worthy enterprise. And, we found five common satisfaction-inducers across denominational lines worthy of our attention. They are (1) sermon preparation, (2) serving as the Church’s spokesperson, (3) leading the public worship, (4) spiritual direction (with the exception of the Episcopalians), and (5) pastoral counseling. Clearly these are the areas among Protestants and Catholics, laity and clergy alike, where there will be mutual agreement, generally speaking, as to the high valuation allocated for ministry -- preaching, witnessing, worshipping, and spiritual and pastoral guidance. That pastors do themselves and their parishes a great service directly in proportion to the amount of time allocated for these five primary functions goes without saying. We would suggest that in most cases where stress is being generated in the parish setting, the pastor and the congregation would be well served if these five activities were to be accentuated.
The distinctive satisfaction-inducers, those unique to each individual tradition, were less clear among the Protestants, none showing up in the data for the Methodist tradition and only one for the Lutherans. When we remember that seven out of fifteen activities were stress-inducing for Methodist clergy, whereas for Lutherans and Episcopalians only four and for Catholics only three, we should have anticipated that satisfying situations would be less likely distinctive to the Methodist tradition than to the other three. For Lutherans and Episcopalians, the highest single activity of satisfaction not held in common with the other two traditions was that of presiding at the Eucharist (which they shared with Catholics but not Methodists). This reflects a growing sense of “catholicity” among the Lutheran and Episcopal Church leaders and laity in America and the trend will certainly continue. Distinctive satisfaction-inducing situations for the Catholics number three and they include (1) presiding at the Eucharist (shared with Lutherans but not Methodists), (2) sacramental ministries other than Eucharist, and (3) involvement in the social life of the parish. These three activities are historically characteristic of Catholic clergy and today the level of satisfaction between clergy and laity in these three areas proves to be a distinctive mark of the relationship which exists between the priest and the parish in the Catholic Church. It is a source of strength and hope for their future as well (Boehnlein, 2006).

It would be unfair of us, on the basis of this one study, to attempt to pontificate as to the full scope of ministry in today’s Church or to propose that we have both identified the causes of stress among the clergy and a solution to that problem. We have, however, studied four thousand randomly selected clergy divided equally among four major Christian traditions. That which has caught and sustained our attention throughout this study has been those activities of ministry which are perceived by the clergy themselves to be stress-inducing and, happily, those likewise which are satisfaction-inducing activities. We have attempted to highlight problem areas in order both to deepen our understanding of the problems and to hopefully provide relevant
Several major problems across the board have presented themselves to us, such as the need for communities of faith to be better informed and educated as to the nature and function of ministry and the relevance of such activities as studying Scripture and theology, and, in many instances, the need for the community to appreciate the relevance of clergy activity in the wider world beyond the parish. But one of the most striking and consistently troubling phenomena gleaned from this study has been the quite obvious reality of the overworked clergy. That is to say, clergy are quite obviously spending too many hours on the job discharging too many duties with too many stresses and frustrations, many brought on by their own perceptions of parish expectations and in others by their own self-understanding as to the nature of ministry. Whatever the cause, clergy stress and exhaustion -- physical, emotional, spiritual -- is a problem that will not go away easily and must be addressed by both the lay and clerical communities alike. Whether suffering from a messiah complex (I must save the world) or from an anxiety about job security (I must keep proving myself), the problem is real and pervasive (Williams, et. al., 2004).

Throughout this study, we have endeavored to make clear the fact that what is being discovered in these data are “clergy perceptions” rather than either perceptions of and by the laity or insights gained by an objective gleaning of parish-based responses. The issue before us from the outset has been “clergy perceptions” of these various ministry activities such their perceptions determine their outlook on their communities and their ministries (Ali, et. al. 2005; Morgan, 2010).

Other studies might be done in which the parish itself is asked to address the same and similar questions regarding their own understanding of ministry and their expectations regarding their clergy. It would be, indeed, a worthwhile endeavor. Yet, nevertheless, it would be quite different from what we set out to do.
and the findings may or may not corroborate ours here. But in closing, let us be clear in what we have done. We have asked the clergy to tell us what they do with their time and how they evaluate those activities in terms of priorities, and, secondly, we have asked them to share with us what they think their communities of faith think and feel about those same activities in terms of priorities. In so doing, we have identified points of stress and points of satisfaction felt by the clergy in the exercise of their ministry. If we have done this, we have fulfilled our goal. If not, it still needs to be done.

Endnotes


Pastoral Logotherapy

Man’s Quest for Meaning in Life and Death Issues

Jeremiah N. Murasso

Introduction

Throughout the ages, man has sought to define, acquire and preserve a sense of wholeness and purpose to his life. Man’s search for ultimate meaning has at times been met with detours along the way as a result of his desire to identify more closely with the world. Yet despite these brief spiritual digressions, which send man in divergent directions searching for ultimate meaning and purpose for living, man’s unconscious hunger for wholeness and completeness, although unrevealed and unexplainable continues to arouse the human spirit in its desire for ultimate fulfillment. In man’s quest for wholeness, throughout the ages, man has found himself confronted by fleeting forms of happiness, the result of which has reinforced and at times, intensified the feelings of personal estrangement from self, from others and from God.

Man’s search for ultimate meaning has often times resulted in his obsession with feelings that focus upon the unfulfilled needs and desires of the present; confusing the needs of the soul with the desires of the body. Consumed with the obsession to identify with the world and its false and fleeting claims for providing happiness, man has avoided the innate inclination for rediscovering and rekindling a relationship with the Hidden God; a re-discovery that man often
avoids until that time in his life when he is confronted with unalterable suffering or the imminence of death (Frankl, 1968).

**Overview of Pastoral Logotherapy**

As man gives into the forces outside of the self, the spiritual malaise within man’s soul intensifies until it paralyzes both the psychological and the physical. By assisting man in his rediscovery of his spiritual potential, the practitioner of *Pastoral Logotherapy* helps man to focus on the *noetic*; thus enables man to overcome psychological and physical paralysis by addressing his spiritual disease. Once man becomes cognizant of the spiritual realities, he is in a better position to take charge of his life and to adhere to personal responsibilities for living, for facing unalterable suffering, or for confronting the nearness of death (Frankl, 1968).

In our postmodern world, man continues to struggle with and is often confused by the meaning and purpose of his life, and his place in the trajectory of human existence. This is especially true when man is confronted with unexpected suffering, or the suffering brought on by forces or situations outside of himself. Frankl (1984, p. 116) refers to such occurrences as: “fate that cannot be changed;” the unexpected sorrow and pain that results in unmitigated mental anguish, inescapable physical suffering or imminent death, due to a sudden accident, an irreversible illness, or as a result of the death of a loved one.

Practitioners of *Pastoral Logotherapy* assist man as he struggles to find meaning and purpose when confronted with life and death issues, all of which seek validation in relation to man’s *Ultimate* concerns, i.e., the need to and the unconscious hunger for identification with the *Unconscious God*. Practitioners of *Pastoral Logotherapy* strive to assist man as he is confronted with his own mortality, end-of-life questions and the need for answers as well as his capacity to persevere, and consequently transform suffering through self-transcendence. When speaking of the spiritual core in
man, Frankl (2000, p. 34) says: “the spiritual core, and only the spiritual core, warrants and constitutes oneness and wholeness in man. And wholeness means, the integration of the somatic, psychic and spiritual aspects of man.” Consequently, when healing takes place at man’s noetic realm, wholeness is restored to the psychological and physical. This results in what Frankl (1968, p. 33) describes as “a genuine faith that begins to spring forth from [rediscovered] inner strength; such a belief adds immeasurably to human vitality.” This human vitality about which Frankl speaks provides man with renewed meaning and purpose for living and doing and being.

Pastoral Logotherapy seeks to re-kindle man’s unconscious religiousness and to help him find meaning, at a time in his life when personal crises, unavoidable suffering or the imminence of death results in feelings of despair or anger, directed at one’s fellow man or at God. Frankl (2000, p.73) notes: “it is the task of Logotherapy to remind the patient of his unconscious religiousness---that is to say, to let it enter his conscious mind again.” Too often, however, when man is confronted with situations that appear unalterable, the little faith that he might possess becomes weakened, giving way to doubt about an afterlife, and despair as to the existence of a loving and merciful God.

Man needs to believe that his life as well as life-choices is right with God, so that he can face unalterable suffering or the prospect of death with peaceful resignation, rather than with feeling that he is being punished or abandoned by God. It is in such situations, when man despairs about his lack of control over his life and life-choices, that his relationship to the transcendent becomes repressed. Yet, although repressed, it emerges in what Frankl (2000, p.73) refers to as an “unrest of the heart.” The unrestful heart can also be described in terms of incompleteness, of unfilled dreams, even memories of poor choices made in man’s past. All these images of unfulfilled or unmet expectations flash before man’s eyes as he tries to come to terms with his own mortality. In such situations, it becomes the task of Pastoral Logotherapy, not only to “remind the patient of his unconscious
religiousness,” but to help him to transform hopelessness into hope. Pastoral Logotherapy seeks healing at the spiritual core of man’s being. It is this aspect of man that warrants wholeness, because it is at the level of soul that man is confronted with his ontology. It is at this level that the spirit seeks to integrate the somatic, the psychological and the spiritual aspects of man. The three cases that are described below are examples (names have been changed), of patients who, having been confronted with the imminence of their death, experienced a restless human spirit that yearned for closure with regard to unfinished life-issues prior to their journey home.

The Case of Carmelo

Carmelo was a young man in his mid-forties who had battled with several different forms of cancer for years. At the time that I made contact with Carmelo, the cancer had apparently spread throughout his body and into the brain. The doctors told Carmelo that he had at most, two months to live. Carmelo was connected to several different IV drips and was ingesting what he described as a “pharmacy of pills.” Although against medical advice, Carmelo decided to set himself free from all medications and to place himself in God’s hands. At this point, Carmelo’s doctors informed him and his two daughters that such action would diminish Carmelo’s lucidity; thus the body would quickly shut down and death would be imminent.

It was in this climate that the hospital staff notified me that Carmelo wanted to see a priest. Carmelo was asking to speak with a priest and to receive what he described as the “Last Rites of the Church.” In similar situations, standing by the bed of a dying patient, I make it a practice not to speak more than I need to; permitting the patient to express himself, and to verbalize his feelings at the moment. This is not a time for correction, nor is it a time for preaching. In these very precious moments when man’s human spirit is beginning its transition from the body to a better place, it is time for the pastoral logotherapist or minister to help make that passage as
smooth as possible, without introducing any unnecessary conversation that might present itself as a hindrance. As I walked to Carmelo’s bed, I noted that he was staring aimlessly into space. I greeted Carmelo, and then I did what I usually do: I waited for a response, a reaction.

“Thank-you for coming,” Carmelo said. “I did not expect you so soon.”
“I can return if this is a bad time,” I responded.
“Bad time? If you leave, I won’t be here when you return.”

Silence ensued, and I continued to stand at Carmelo’s bedside waiting for further instructions as to what it was that he wanted me to do or say. “Yes.” He continued, breaking a thirty second silence that felt like hours.

“I am dying. Just before you walked through that door, the last IV was taken out of me. I am going home.”
“You are going home?”
“No, not home where I live, home to God. I am afraid to die; I am afraid I am not good enough to see God.”

Carmelo began to tremble, his hands were shaking. At that point, a nurse came into the room. Seeing Carmelo shaking and crying, she stepped in front of me, as if I were invisible. Looking at Carmelo, she shouted:
“You should not have removed the IV drips. Do you want some morphine?”
“No,” shouted Carmelo, “Leave me alone, I want to talk to my priest!”

Once again, brushing me aside as if I were not there, the nurse left, huffing as if she had just lost an argument with her husband.
As I stood silent, I realized, as did Carmelo, that the time for medication was over, because that which Carmelo needed most at this very moment, was not another morphine drip, but rather, as Frankl noted, spiritual problems are not and cannot be fixed with medication. This now, was a spiritual problem that Carmelo was battling, but unlike his battle with cancer, which he lost, Carmelo desperately wanted to win this spiritual battle and to let go of the anger and guilt which had consumed his soul in the same way that the cancer had consumed his body.

A doctor should not prescribe a tranquilizer cure for the despair of a man who is grappling with spiritual problems. Rather, with the tools of a “psychotherapy in spiritual terms” he will attempt to give the patient spiritual support, to provide him with some spiritual anchorage (Frankl, 1968, p.14).

It would be my job to help Carmelo muster up the strength to find meaning in dying so that his life-lived would also have meaning. Carmelo wept silently and then quite audibly as if I was not still standing beside his bed.

“Why are you crying, Carmelo?”

“Why not, what’s left, nothing….gone, why is he doing this to me?”

“He?”

“God!”

“Do you think that God is doing this to you?”

“I’m not sure I believe in God any more…..actually for a long time,” said Carmelo.

“It sounds like at one time in your life, you might have believed in God. In any case, you called me, I presume because I represent God; a God that you now say is not real. I have a feeling, Carmelo that on some level you still might believe.”
“Ya, I guess I did, or I do. I always went to church, even helped to hand out the communion wafers, and I also taught religious instructions to second graders. Ya, I guess I did believe in God, but no more.”

“So, tell me, Carmelo, what was he like, the God that you once believed in?”

“Is this a trick question?” Carmelo asked with a half grin, and for a moment appearing to forget his present plight.

“No, it’s not a trick question. Everyone has their own interpretation of God. I’m just wondering what your image of God was like and why this image might have changed.”

“...I guess I always thought that God was in charge, that he knew what to do and that he does not let anything hurt you. I guess like a real father, watching out for the kids.”

“If God is in charge, do you think that he has a plan for you and what you are now going through? Eventually, Carmelo was able to acknowledge that if he continued to believe that God was in charge of his life and that God was all goodness that perhaps God had a plan for Carmelo, and at the moment this plan was hidden, at least to Carmelo.

“Can I tell you a dream that really scared me? I don’t know what to make of it.”

“Sure, tell me your dream.” Carmelo hit the button on his bed in order to go from a reclined position to an upright position.

“Father, you better sit down for this!”

Carmelo shared with me a dream in which he was greeted by God. After a pause, God wrapped his arms around him and God began to weep. Carmelo could not describe where he actually was, but he knew it was not heaven, because he claimed it was too noisy. Carmelo went on to say, that God stared at him, “eyeball to eyeball,” and then the brightness faded and Carmelo felt cold and dirty and guilty for doing something, but he was not sure what. Was this dream a warning from God for Carmelo to reconnect with him? Was this
guilt at work in Carmelo, as he recognized his lapse of faith? Was it the morphine drip? Was he crazy? Was he trying to convince the priest that as bad as he was, God knew another side of him? I don’t know. I do know that sometimes all it takes is the right experience, even a dream to help man unburden himself and suddenly permit the Unconscious God to become conscious and real. Man’s discovery of God at a time in his life when he sees no real meaning for being or doing, enables man to give meaning to his existence, especially if he is confronted with his own mortality either through unavoidable suffering or a fast-approaching death.

God is the partner of your most intimate soliloquies. Whenever you are talking to yourself in utmost sincerity and ultimate solitude—he to whom you are addressing yourself may justifiably be called God. Such a definition avoids the dichotomy between atheistic and theistic Weltanschauungs. The difference between them emerges only later on, when the irreligious person insists that his soliloquies are just that, monologues with himself, and the religious person interprets his as real dialogues with someone else. I think that what counts first and more than anything else is the utmost sincerity and honesty. If God really exists he certainly is not going to argue with the irreligious persons because they mistake him for their own selves and misname him (Frankl, 1978, p.63).

Carmelo had done what I waited for him to do. He had opened the door for what I refer to as “God talk.” Griffith & Griffith (2002) speak about including the voice of a patient’s God into the conversation. As a practitioner of Pastoral Logotherapy, I have adopted this technique because it helps put a face on the patient’s God for the patient. In addition, it helps to make conscious, the patient’s
repressed unconscious religiousness so that the patient’s relationship to transcendence can be liberated (Frankl, 2000; 1978; 1975; 1968). When a patient can put a face on God, faith becomes credible in the sense that the Divine is demythologized; thus takes on personal meaning for the patient. This is what happened in my brief encounter with Carmelo. Including God in our conversation meant that Carmelo was able to slowly let go of years of guilt turned into anger. The Unconscious God, latent in Carmelo, at the right moment received permission to emerge; thus restored meaning to a life perceived as meaningless and a death that was viewed as a punishment. This is Pastoral Logotherapy in action.

I anointed Carmelo, we prayed several prayers. Two hours had passed; it seemed like seconds. Carmelo was now moving in and out of consciousness. I said a final prayer in silence, asking God to be merciful to his son. I left Carmelo, and although I was not sure that he heard, I told him I would check in the next day. I then stopped at the nurse’s station and while speaking with staff, bells and whistles went off: Code Blue. I looked in the direction of Carmelo’s room, into which a flood of medical staff were going: I thought to myself, “Good for you, Carmelo.” The nurse asked if I needed to return to his room. I indicated that I had served my purpose; it was now time for my Boss to step in….as only He could and would.

The Case of Albert

Albert was a man in his late sixties. He did not call for a priest or a therapist. As it happened, I was making the rounds in the hospital and I noticed Albert lying in bed and staring into space. Although Albert had never met me prior to this visit, he launched into an attacking conversation as if he indeed knew me. Albert was quick to tell me that he was not a believer in anything, yet there was something in this man that appeared to yearn for connection with the spiritual.
“Here comes the holy one of God, what do you want priest? If you have come to convert me or to take a collection you are out of luck.”

To say the least, I was rather taken by surprise, even though I did not show it. I quickly responded by saying, “Sir, if you want me to leave, just tell me so. You don’t have to humiliate me and my profession.” I stood beside his bed. He remained silent, looking directly at the wall.

“You are wasting your time, I have not been in church in 30 years, I don’t give any money to the church, and frankly where was God all these years when I needed him?”

I was silent.

Albert broke the silence, as I anticipated he would. “Besides, I am dying, not long now.”

“It must me scary.”

“You don’t know the half of it.”

“I probably don’t, but I have a little time if you want to catch me up to speed.” I never initiate a conversation with a patient by saying, “If you want to talk or do you want to talk to someone?” I always frame a statement in a manner that empowers the patient to make the first move.

I decided that despite Albert’s sarcasm and his dagger-like comments I would remain with Albert in his hospital room as long as I felt that something of a spiritual nature was happening. I see a lot of people like Albert, not however, as abusive, I meet people who claim to have no religion or no faith, yet although many claim to be irreligious, their negative venting that is directed toward religion, church, God, other believers, etc., sometimes acts as a release for them, as they empty themselves from years of hurt and guilt and anger, either at God or at another human being whom they believe has disappointed them. Frankl (2000; 1975; 1968) speaks of an unconscious religiousness which he explains as a latent relation to transcendence which is inherent in man. In other words, according to Frankl man has always stood and continues to stand in an intentional
relation to transcendence. At times, however, this relationship to God becomes frustrated and man becomes distracted and confused; thus becomes blinded to the spiritual in his midst.

If one calls this intentional referent of such an unconscious relation ‘God,’ it is apt to speak of an ‘unconscious God.’ This, however, in no way implies that God is unconscious to himself, but rather that God may be unconscious to man and that man’s relation to God may be unconscious (1975, p.61; 2000, p.68).

In the case of Albert, his relationship to God was not only unconscious, it was frustrated; thus his connected-ness to God had remained repressed for a long time. Albert, like so many in society today, suffers from what Frankl (2000; 1984; 1968) refers to as noogenic neurosis; a frustration of the will-to-meaning, which originates neither in the psychological nor in the physical. Rather, its origin is spiritual and as such has a direct effect on man’s psychological and physical well-being as well as his overall relation to others, and to God. Through the logos, from the Greek denoting meaning or word, the practitioner of Pastoral Logotherapy helps the patient to re-orient himself in re-discovering meaning to his life, even as he is confronted with an irreversible dilemma that in some cases leads to terminal illness or death.

The spiritual unconscious becomes conscious by an experience which may not necessarily be available to the person. However, a spark, whether it be a poem, a conversation, a sermon, a sentence in a novel, a dream; something connects in the person, the result of which re-ignites, re-kindles the human spirit propelling it to bond with the Transcendent Other. This is what I have found with so many individuals like Albert, who for so many reasons spend their lives denying their spiritual core, suppressing any and all access of the spirit; inhibiting it from becoming a spiritual/religious Life-line to
something/someone beyond the material world. Consequently, in the midst of a crisis, in the midst of existential frustration this repressed transcendence emerges and shows up as “unrest of the heart.” Frankl’s (1975; 2000) description of the “Repressed Angel” within man applies to individuals like Albert, and perhaps to all of us on some level at some time in our lives. Man represses the spiritual in himself by permitting the problems of the moment or the crisis of the week to bruise, break and bury the human spirit. As Frank noted, once the human spirit is repressed, it becomes a demon in man with paralyzing tendencies; thwarting any possible connection to the Divine. It is the task of Pastoral Logotherapy to give the “Repressed Angel” back its wings, in order that it can soar and re-discover meaning and purpose for living and doing.

**Case of Myra**

Myra was a 93 yr. old woman who resided in the same nursing home where my mother is also a resident. Myra, I was told was going in and out of consciousness, appearing anxious and restless for some unknown reason. Myra had asked for a priest to visit with her, to hear her confession and to administer the anointing of the sick for the last time. Myra had shared with her son that she felt it was time she go home to God where she would also see her son’s father and her husband of 60 years.

I had never met Myra, actually did not know who she was. I would, however, pass her room daily to get to my mother’s room which was at the far end of the same wing. I usually stopped at the nurse’s station which was in close proximity to Myra’s room. I would make light conversation with the nursing staff as well as obtain an update on my mother’s condition.

On this one particular day, following the same routine, I had no sooner arrived at my mother’s room, when the nurse approached me, indicating that Myra was asking to speak with me. The nurse seemed surprised when I informed her that I had no idea about whom she was
speaking. The nurse went on to say that Myra identified me by name, asking that Father Jeremiah come to her room. I indicated that it did not matter whether I knew Myra that I would gladly go to her room, anoint her and hear her confession.

Upon my arrival at Myra’s room, I was stopped by her son, who informed me that several days prior, a “young priest” had upset Myra by refusing to hear her confession. He told Myra that he himself probably had more sins than she. He then anointed her and departed, leaving Myra with what appeared to be unfinished business with God. Myra’s son indicated that up until the young priest’s visit, his mother, although “slowly slipping away,” was not as anxious, and very much wanted to have her confession heard by a priest. As Myra’s son left the room, I approached Myra’s bed.

“Hello Myra, I am Father Murasso, and I have come to hear your confession, and then I have some holy oil for you.”

“What is your first name?” Myra asked, in a soft shaky voice.

“Jeremiah, just like the prophet.”

“Yes, you are the one. He said that you would come.” Myra then opened her eyes so very wide, staring first at me, then what seemed to be through me, beyond me, over my shoulder. Then there appeared a big smile on Myra’s face. “I want to make my last confession, before I go home.”

I told Myra that I would be glad to hear her confession, which I did, and then proceeded to anoint her with oil. Myra appeared to be more peaceful. She reminded me of royalty, lying in her beautiful pink-lace nightgown. I anointed her hands, and then proceeded to anoint her forehead. As I touched her head to begin making the sign of the cross, she grabbed my forearm, in a way that pressed my hand into her head. She opened her eyes, and once again looked beyond me. At one point I turned to see if her son had entered the room because her stare was so very specific to some point behind me. Myra then closed her eyes, still grasping my arm. Suddenly, I felt something, like wind, a tingling sensation from her head through my
arm, my neck, my entire body. In a flash the sensation was gone, and so was Myra. Myra went home, but not until she had completed some unfinished business in the world. She had to make things right in her mind, with God; thus explains the restlessness, the anxiety and the tenseness in her body as I first entered her room.

Logotherapy is not a religion, nor is it the objective of the practitioner of Logotherapy to instill religious faith into the patient. This was never Viktor Frankl’s intention. However, in speaking about Logotherapy as a medical ministry, pages into Viktor Frankl’s Doctor & the Soul (1968, p. xxi) Frankl says: “the goal of psychotherapy is to heal the soul, to make it healthy; the aim of religion, is something essentially different---to save the soul.” Religion provides man with an anchor, a feeling of security such as he can find nowhere else. Sometimes, however, the anchor gets waylaid, it becomes buried deep within life’s muck and mire, and although it disappears from sight, it is always present in man, waiting to be rescued and set free. This is the task of Pastoral Logotherapy. Through conversation, i.e., words, past experiences, dreams, scriptural passages that might have at one time or even in the present provided meaning for the patient are all part of the tool box for the practitioner of Pastoral Logotherapy, and all are utilized for the purpose of getting beyond the psychic or physical malaise to the spiritual dis-ease: distress at man’s noetic core.

Pastoral Logotherapy does not provide the individual with the anchor; neither does it impose faith or a particular religious experience. Rather, Pastoral Logotherapy helps man to re-discover and to re-cover that which was always there: an unconscious and at times repressed relationship to the transcendent. Some call this transcendent, “God.” Man’s discovery of God at a time in his life when he sees no real meaning for being or doing, enables man to give meaning to his existence especially if he is confronted with his own mortality, either through unavoidable suffering or a fast-approaching death.
It is only fitting that I close with words from Viktor Frankl himself; words that truly capture the scope and objective of Pastoral Logotherapy:

It is self-evident that belief in a super meaning---whether as a metaphysical concept or in the religious sense of Providence---is of the foremost psychotherapeutic and psychohygienic importance. As a genuine faith springing from inner strength, such a belief adds immeasurably to human vitality. To such a faith there is, ultimately, nothing that is meaningless (Frankl (1968, p.33).

References


Dominus Iesus and Catholic Ecclesiology

James F. Puglisi, SA

In this article I wish to illustrate the importance of the publication of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church* published 6 August 2000. Over ten years have passed since its publication and many comments and articles have been written concerning its importance for Catholic ecclesiology. It is not the purpose of this article to do a review of this ample material but rather to reflect on this important document for the teaching of ecclesiology.

The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* is structured in six sections:

I. The Fullness and Definitiveness of the Revelation of Jesus Christ;
II. The Incarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit in the Work of Salvation;
III. Unicity and Universality of the Salvific Mystery of Jesus Christ;
IV. Unicity and Unity of the Church;
V. The Church: Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Christ;
VI. The Church and the Other Religions in Relation to Salvation

For the purpose of analysis in this presentation, we can be divided into two principal parts. The first deals with the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions (I–III); the second, the relationship between the Catholic Church and other Christian
churches and ecclesial communities (IV–VI). However, let us take a brief look at the synthesis provided by the Congregation itself.

**Synthesis of Dominus Iesus**

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is concerned with the tendency of some Catholic theologians to argue that “all religions may be equally valid ways of salvation” (1). These theories are “relativistic” and “pluralistic” because, among other things, those theories question “the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus,...the inseparable personal unity between the eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth,” the universality of Christ’s redemptive work on behalf of the human community, “the universal salvific mission of the Church, the inseparability—while recognizing the distinction—of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church”. Dominus Iesus asserts that such theories have become “quite common” in our day. However, no concrete examples were offered. The Declaration’s stated intention is “to reiterate and clarify certain truths of the faith in the face of problematic and even erroneous propositions”.

The position of the Congregation is, “against the theory of the limited, incomplete or imperfect character of the revelation of Jesus Christ,” and affirms that “since Jesus is true God and true man, his words and deeds manifest the totality and definitiveness of the revelation of the mystery of God, even if the depth of that mystery remains in itself transcendent and inexhaustible”.

“Against the thesis of a twofold salvific economy, that of the eternal Word, which would be universal and valid also outside the Church, and that of the incarnate Word, which would be limited to Christians,” the Declaration reasserts “the unicity of the salvific economy of the one incarnate Word, Jesus Christ” and insists that his paschal mystery is “the sole and universal source of salvation for all humanity”. Moreover, the salvific work of the Holy Spirit cannot be
separated from that of the risen Christ, because there is “a single Trinitarian economy, willed by the Father and realized in the mystery of Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit”.

Against the view that Christ can be separated from his Church, the *Dominus Iesus* affirms that there is “an historical continuity between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church” (§16). Following the council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, n. 8, the Declaration reaffirms the teaching that the one Church of Christ “subsists in” in the Catholic Church. Whatever “efficacy” non-Catholic churches and ecclesial communities may have is derived “from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church” (Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 3). To be regarded as a church “in the proper sense” rather than as an ecclesial community, a non-Catholic body must possess a “valid episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery...” Such churches are “in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Catholic Church” (§17).

*Dominus Iesus* recognizes that the kingdom of God cannot simply be identified with the Church in its visible and social reality, moreover it insists upon “the intimate connection” between them (18). However modern theories tend to divorce the two realms in order to create an area outside of, and even independently of, the Church where God’s saving activity is at work on behalf of non-Christians. While not denying the universal salvific will of God, the Declaration correctly notes that such a truth must be maintained *together* with the equally important truth that “the one Christ is the mediator and way of salvation” for all (§18). We do not know how the salvific grace of God comes to individual non-Christians. The Second Vatican Council limited itself to the statement that God bestows salvation “in ways known to himself” (*Ad Gentes*, n. 7). “At the same time, however, it is clear that it would be contrary to the Catholic faith to consider the Church as a way of salvation alongside those constituted by other religions”. Accordingly, “one cannot attribute to these [other religions]...a divine origin or an *ex opere*
operato salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they follow from superstitions or other errors constitute an obstacle to salvation” (§21).

Therefore, “with the coming of Christ, God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument of salvation for all humanity. This truth does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time it rules out in a radical way that mentality of indifferentism” (§22) which holds that one religion is as good as another. On the contrary, as the council’s Declaration on Religious Liberty Dignitatis humanae proclaimed, “We believe that this one true religion continues to exist in the catholic and apostolic Church, to which the Lord entrusted the task of spreading it among all people” (§1).

The basics of the document are presented with clarity by the Congregation’s own synthesis. However we also know that the Declaration received much press coverage. Much of this coverage was not well informed and obviously never even referred to the synthesis of the Declaration. Unfortunately the Declaration received more of a negative reaction which could have been avoided. This does not mean that all discussion about the document should stop as is seen by the discussions carried out between then Cardinals Ratzinger and Kasper. The purpose of these exchanges was to clarify the important elements of the Church’s teaching and what was open for further theological reflection. It is also very important to realize the authority of the document stated in the document that concludes: “Pope John Paul II, with sure knowledge and his apostolic authority, ratified and confirmed this Declaration and ordered its publication.” This means that it is certainly authoritative and must be taken seriously by all members of the Catholic Church. In the teaching of dogmatic theology it is always important to be able to identify the authority that is behind documents and to situate them correctly as to the obligations that they demand. While this Declaration is not from the Holy Father himself it has a lesser degree of authority than a papal
encyclical, such as *Ut unum sint*, would have. In an encyclical the popes exercise their ordinary teaching authority. The highest degree of assent is required by the truths of revelation followed by the teaching of the Church contained in Conciliar teachings and this is followed by papal teachings such as encyclicals that call for an attitude of respectful listening and willingness to conform one’s judgment to the pope’s teaching as far as one is able to do so and finally by documents of the Congregation which has delegated authority to exercise vigilance over the teaching of Catholic doctrines.

Since the teaching magisterium falls to the bishops in communion with the Pope, let us take a very quick look at the positions taken by some of the English speaking bishops following the publication of *Dominus Iesus*.

**Episcopal Reactions**

A rapid survey of some leading figures in the English-speaking hierarchy provided positive reactions to the document. Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, applauded its opposition to religious relativism. Bernard Cardinal Law, former Archbishop of Boston, characterized the document as a reaffirmation of Catholic teaching (2). One of its strongest defenders, Desmond Connell, Archbishop of Dublin, insisted that the document was not unecumenical nor its language ungenerous (3). Other bishops were more cautious and more nuanced in their praise. William Cardinal Levada, former Archbishop of San Francisco and retired Prefect of the CDF, Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, retired Archbishop of Washington, D.C., and Alexander Brunett, former Archbishop of Seattle, are cases in point (4). The Irish bishops conference also issued a generally positive, but guarded, statement.

John Paul II felt that he needed to intervene because of the reactions to the document. He did so at the *Angelus* on October 1, 2000 the Pope stated that the Declaration “does not deny salvation to non-Christians but points to its ultimate source in Christ, in whom
man and God are united”. He continued that “God gives light to all in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation, granting them salvific grace in ways known to himself”. Finally, John Paul concluded, “If the document, together with the Second Vatican Council, Declares that ‘the single Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church,’ it does not intend thereby to express scant regard for the other churches and ecclesial communities”. Rather, “the Catholic Church...suffers from the fact that true particular churches and ecclesial communities with precious elements of salvation are separated from her. The document thus expresses once again the same ecumenical passion that is the basis of my encyclical Ut unum sint. I hope that this Declaration, which is close to my heart, can, after so many erroneous interpretations, finally fulfill its function both of clarification and of openness” (5).

In a letter to the then President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), Edward Cardinal Cassidy, the pope expressed the hope that “the ‘spirit of Assisi’ would not be extinguished, but could spread throughout the world and inspire new witnesses of peace and dialogue” (6). John Paul, on more than one occasion after the publication of Dominus Iesus, spoke about the commitment of the Catholic Church to bother the ecumenical dialogue as well as promoting inter-religious relationship (7).

Now let us turn our attention to look at the positive contribution of the Congregation’s Declaration to Catholic ecclesiology.

**Dominus Iesus and Ecclesiology**

The stated purpose of Dominus Iesus was to “recall to Bishops, theologians, and all the Catholic faithful, certain indispensable elements of Christian doctrine” and “not to propose solutions to questions that are matters of free theological debate, but rather to set forth again the doctrine of the Catholic faith in these areas” (§3). The Declaration further continues to list a number of indispensable elements of Christian doctrine that the Congregation considers to
have endangered by certain theories of religious pluralism. Three of the themes in the list touch on issues treated by the teaching of ecclesiology: “the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the inseparability ... of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church” (§4).

It is important to note that the ecclesiological dimension of this Declaration is not only representative of Catholic ecclesiology but for the most part all Christian churches and ecclesial communions concerning the Biblical understanding of the Church. In addition since Jesus Christ is the one foundation of the church, every ecclesiology needs to begin with a solid and balanced Christology based in the Scriptures and derived from revelation. The centrality of the Biblical affirmation that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life—the one Redeemer and mediator between God and humanity—and that the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are one and the same is the central point for developing a sound ecclesiology. Christ is the one foundation of the Church, an affirmation that is universally accepted by all Christians (8).

Interestingly, the very sensitive issue of the processions in the Trinity is treated ecumenically by Dominus Iesus. The Orthodox would note that, in its opening article, the Declaration reproduces the text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed without the ecumenically divisive “filioque”: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified” (§1). The document also refers to the communion of Orthodox churches not only as “particular churches” but also as “true” particular churches (§17).

The whole first part of the Declaration contains an excellent résumé of Catholic teaching on the mystery of the Church as it is the authentic teaching of the Second Vatican Council. This fact alone would recommend this part of the document for the teaching of a fundamental course on Catholic ecclesiology. Dominus Iesus takes into account the most ecumenically and interreligiously generous
teachings of the Council upon which to make a solid foundation for any work on ecclesiology and the method of dialogue employed by the Catholic Church. The method of the Declaration, however, does not take into account the development in Catholic teaching since the Council. Moreover, this is not really the stated purpose of the Declaration which was to re-state clearly what Catholic teaching is concerning the unicity of Jesus Christ (§3).

While the Declaration clearly states the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God it also strongly rejects the erroneous pre-Vatican positions as Dominus Iesus insists that “the kingdom of God...is not identified with the Church in her visible and social reality. In fact,’ the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church’s visible boundaries’ must not be excluded” (§19) (9). This means that a lot of the negative reactions to the Declaration are based not on a full reading of the document but rather on a prejudiced partial reading taking parts of the Declaration out of context. It must be said clearly that the doctrinal basis affirming the teaching of the Council is the norm for the correct interpretation of the rest of the document since the conciliar teaching in the hierarchy of truth is the point from which all other statements and Declarations of the church are to be situated. Vatican II spoke of those who did not have the Gospel as being “orientated” or related to the Church in various ways (10) after affirming the necessity of the church for salvation (11). This is why the extension of the sacramental dimension of the church becomes important in the Council’s description of the Church as the “universal sacrament of salvation” (12).

(a) Particular churches and ecclesial communities

Dominus Iesus makes an important distinction between true particular churches and ecclesial communities (nn. 16-17) following the distinction of Vatican II. True particular churches, it says, “While not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic
succession and a valid Eucharist...’’ Ecclesial communities, on the other hand, “have not preserved the valid episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery,” and therefore “are not churches in the proper sense...” While not naming specific churches it may be concluded that all of the churches of the Anglican Communion and all of the Protestant churches are to be considered as ecclesial communities and only the Orthodox churches are “true particular churches”. On the other hand, the Declaration reaffirms, with Vatican II, which the individual members of ecclesial communities “are by baptism incorporated in Christ and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church” (n. 17).

In the teaching of ecclesiology we must maintain this delicate nuance that affirms that even though ecclesial communities are not considered true particular churches, nevertheless, they are participated in by the mystery of the Church of Christ as Blessed John Paul II has taught in his encyclical Ut unum sint (§11). Taking up the position of Vatican II the Pope states: “To the extent that these elements [of sanctification and truth] are found in other Christian communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them”. We can argue that if students interpret the CDF’s position to be at odds with Ut unum sint and the Council itself, it would mean that they would reject the council’s Doctrinal Commission’s interpretation, namely, that these various non-Catholic Christian communities possess “ecclesiastical elements which they have preserved from our common patrimony, and which confer on them a truly ecclesial character. In these communities the one sole Church of Christ is present, albeit imperfectly...” (13).

This brings us to an important methodological point in the hermeneutics of conciliar teaching, namely that it is the Council that interprets the Council. In the teaching of the Second Vatican Council we may note that students are no longer capable of turning to the discussions that took place at the Council since they do not have access to the acts of the synod but only read the conciliar texts without realizing that almost every sentence written in the these texts
was the result of a long and profound debate. To correctly understand what is written in the way that the Council Fathers intended, students need to turn to the *Acta Synodalia* and take up the debates that are recorded there.

For example, this is most crucial when one seeks to understand the Council’s intention in using the expression “ecclesial communities” and correctly reading *Dominus Iesus*. After a diligent examination of all the arguments “pro” and “contra”, the Theological Commission concludes:

Praetereundum non est Coetus ex divisione occidentali ortos non esse tantum summam seu congeriem Christifidelium individuorum, sed constitui elementis socialibus ecclesiasticis, quae ipsi ex communi patrimonio conservant et quae ipsis characterem vere ecclesiam conferunt. In his Coetibus unica Christi Ecclesia, quasi tamquam in Ecclesiis particularibus, quamvis imperfecte, praesens et mediantibus elementis ecclesiasticis aliquo modo actuosa est (14).

Commenting in an address to the Canon Law Society on the meaning on the use of ecclesial communities, the former executive director of the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, the late Father John Hotchkin, noted that the term “ecclesial communities” is “something of a neologism,” coined to cover a variety of meanings. He noted, there is no Anglican Church as such, but a communion of churches (the Church of England, the Church of Canada, the Church of Ireland, the Episcopal Church in the USA, for example) which together constitute the Anglican Communion. Similarly the same holds true for Lutheranism and the Lutheran World Federation, for Methodism and the World Methodist Council, for the Alliance of Reformed Churches, and so forth.
Father Hotchkin cited one of Pope Benedict’s predecessors in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Jérôme Hamer, O.P., who pointed out that there were three variants on the church/community terminology in successive schemata or drafts of the conciliar texts: separated churches and communities (employed in the Decree on Ecumenism, n. 3), Christian communities (used in an earlier draft of the subtitle of the third chapter of the Decree on Ecumenism, and subsequently changed to “churches and ecclesial communities”), and ecclesial communities separated from us (used in the same decree, n. 22). Hamer insisted that the council used this diverse terminology “because it did not wish to prejudge or definitively pronounce on the [validity of the] ordained ministries of those Protestant communities in which it perceived this possible deficiency or defect by stating that they were nonetheless churches in the full theological sense of the word. The council did not wish to pre-empt this question, but to leave it open” (15). Because the council did decide to leave open the question of the validity of Protestant orders, Hotchkin himself concludes that we can “draw no hard and fast distinction between churches and ecclesial communities as we know them at this time”. It is evident that the choices made in recent years by some of the ecclesial communities born out of the Reformation has made the question of the validity of Protestant orders more difficult. In spite the very positive results of various dialogues with Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed and Methodists concerning the understanding of the Eucharist, the basic question returns to the issue of the validity of ordination in these communities (16). The Declaration Dominus Iesus invites all to a very profound reflection on this point once again demonstrating that in studying this matter one needs to return to the sources of the Council’s teaching and the theological debates that enabled the Council to affirm such truths.

(b) The Church and the churches
In the light of the precision that the Declaration has made we need to carefully read what the Declaration does not say about the relationship of the Church of Christ and the churches. *Dominus Iesus* does not say that the Church of Christ continues to exist “only” in the Catholic Church; rather that it is only in the Catholic Church that it continues to exist “fully” (§16). In the evolution of the various schemas of *De ecclesia*, one must take note of the delicate nuance found in the interpretation of what was expressed before the council contained in the doctrine of Pius XII and that of the teaching of Vatican II (17).

Indeed, it was the teaching of Pius XII, in his encyclicals *Mystici corporis* and *Humani generis*, that the Catholic Church and the Mystical Body of Christ are co-terminus “one and the same” ("unum idemque esse") (18). This exclusive identification was still being asserted in the first two drafts of the council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*: “The Church of Christ is the Catholic Church”. But the council replaced the copulative verb “is” with the ecclesiologically and ecumenically broader “subsists in” (n. 8).

The late Cardinal Aloys Grillmeier, a member of the council’s Theological Commission wrote in his commentary on the text of chapter one of *Lumen gentium*: “This means that the Roman Church, as a local Church, is only part of the whole Church, though its bishop is head of all the bishops of the Catholic Church”. According to Grillmeier, “‘ecclesiality’ does not simply coincide with the Catholic Church, because ecclesial elements of sanctification and truth can be found outside it” (19).

In changing the verb from “*est*” to “*subsistit in*” the council fathers clearly intended to include non-Catholic churches and ecclesial communities in the one, although divided, Body of Christ. Otherwise, they would have left the teaching of Pius XII in place and held to the verb “*est*”. In clarifying the meaning of “*subsistit in*”, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith explains:
With the expression *subsistit in*, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that “outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth” (20), that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church (21). But with respect to these, it needs to be stated that “they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church (22).

Cardinal Jan Willebrands, at the time president of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, in a very important lecture given in 1987 in Atlanta, Georgia noted that the Council’s linguistic change adds a very subtle nuance to *Mystici corporis* since it expanded the understanding of membership in the Church by the addition of a Christological dimension. Cardinal Willebrands insisted that the meaning of the “*subsistit*” language is that “whoever belongs to Christ belongs to the Church, and hence the limits of the Church are coextensive with those of belonging to Christ”.

Willebrands took the change from “*est*” to “*subsistit in*” to be not only ecclesiological, but also Christological—the one inseparable from the other. For him the two represent a perichoresis whose synthesis is found in an ecclesiology of communion:

Indeed the Church is fundamentally this communion with the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, we can see that on the one hand the depth of this communion determines the depth of incorporation in the Church, and on the other that it
cannot be a question of all or nothing.... *Subsistit in* thus appears, in an ecclesiology of communion, as an attempt to express the transcendence of grace and to give an inkling of the breadth of divine benevolence (23).

The key point here is that it is not a matter of all or nothing. There are degrees of incorporation into the one, Church of Christ, and those degrees of incorporation or communion apply not only to individuals but to separated churches and ecclesial communities (here one speaks of perfect or imperfect communion). According to Vatican II, the Church of Christ continues to exist “fully” only in the Catholic Church (because the Catholic Church alone has the Petrine ministry to the universal Church, exercised by the Bishop of Rome), but the elements of the one Church of Christ also exist, or “subsists in,” these other churches and ecclesial communities (24).

Moreover, the term “church” does not apply only to those Christian communities with an episcopate and a Eucharist deemed “valid” by the Catholic Church. The ultimate bases for communion with the one Church of Christ are faith and baptism. In the words of the Decree on Ecumenism: “For those who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church” (n. 3). *Dominus Iesus* recognizes in principle that there are non-Catholic churches and ecclesial communities in imperfect communion with the Catholic Church. Therefore as Cardinal Willebrands has documented from the discussions of the Theological Commission and the debates is that the Church of Christ is larger than the Catholic Church. It continues fully in (“subsists in”) the Catholic Church, but is not simply identical with it. In addition Grillmeier confirms this meaning when he writes:

Hence the one true Church of Christ exists. It is recognizable, and visible in its own way. But “ecclesiality” does not simply coincide with the
Catholic Church ... . It [ecclesiality] is constituted by the existence of the true benefits of Christ’s foundation which have been preserved in spite of separation, in various degrees, as is explained in the Decree on Ecumenism: the word of revelation and the sacraments, and also the office, the priesthood. This means that “ecclesiality” outside the Catholic Church is realized through participation in the one foundation of Christ (25).

With this further deepening of the meaning of the Council, the student can properly situate Dominus Iesus fully in the line of the Council Fathers and the real significance of the change of verbs in article 8 of Lumen gentium, namely, that the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church are not coextensive (26).

c) The Church and non-Christian religions

The third important element concerning the Church’s ecclesiology that the Declaration takes up has to deal with the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions. While Dominus Iesus does not directly cite one of the most important statements concerning divine salvation one can perceive a reference to article 16 of Lumen gentium: “Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience” (27). What the Declaration notes must be rejected as relativistic is not only that Jesus Christ is only one among many ways to salvation but also that the Church is also only one among many instruments of salvation (ch. III). Recalling the world of John Paul II in his encyclical Redemptoris mission, the Declaration states that “it is necessary to keep these two truths together, namely, the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind and the necessity of
the Church for this salvation” §20 (28). Then continuing §21 says: “With respect to the way in which the salvific grace of God ‘which is always given by means of Christ in the Spirit and has a mysterious relationship to the Church’ comes to individual non-Christians, the Second Vatican Council limited itself to the statement that God bestows it “in ways known to himself” (29). The observations of Cardinal Willebrands cited above could also apply here, namely the link between Christology and ecclesiological principles, between Christ unique Savior and the Church as a means of realizing the unique gift of salvation.

Gerald O’Collins, S.J., retired professor of dogmatic theology at the Gregorian University, has suggested that the problem of language is one of the chief causes for the confusion created by theologians using “pluralism” in an imprecise fashion. For teaching purposes he opines that “We are better off thinking in terms of the incredible love poured out on all humanity by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...” (30).

One way of dealing with the questions that arise is suggested in Cardinal Willebrands’ appeal to an ecclesiology of communion. Cardinal Walter Kasper illustrates this in an address at an international missionary conference. Cardinal Kasper, citing John Paul II’s encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, notes that “The Spirit of God is present and at work everywhere, limited by neither space nor time” (31). The Spirit “can be at work outside the visible Church and...in diverse ways...does act in a hidden manner”. Kasper reminds us that Vatican II, “rejected the old, exclusionary theory and practice, according to which, since Jesus Christ is the one and only mediator of salvation, outside of acknowledging him, i.e., ‘outside the Church,’ there is no salvation...” (32).

An ecclesiology of communion rooted in the Trinitarian model serves as the justification of diversity as Kasper points out:

> The most profound reason that profession of faith in the one God does not prescind from diversity but
rather includes it to a certain extent lies in the Trinitarian confession of one God in three persons....It means that the one and only God is not a solitary God, but from eternity is self-giving love in which the Father communicates with the Son, and the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit (33).

It is this self-renunciation and selfless communication on the part of Jesus Christ that is the basis of his invitation to the other religions “to reach their own fullness and completion” (34).

Domus Iesus reconfirms unique place of Christ for salvation in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the teachings of the modern day Popes especially from Paul VI onward with great clarity. We have seen how Christology, ecclesiology and soteriology are intertwined in the text. The Church is the locus theologicus where the mediation of the gift of salvation takes visible form. This is the reason why the Council reaffirmed the necessity of the Church for salvation but at the same time acknowledged the possibility of salvation for those “through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience” (35). The Declaration’s reconfirmation of this fact is important for the teaching of ecclesiology since all forms of relativism which would make the church one possible means of mediation of salvation alongside those constituted by other religions must be completely rejected as being contrary to Catholic belief (§21). Furthermore, with the same clarity, the Declarations makes clear the role of the Church as mediating agent of salvation when it says: “Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church which is his body” (§16).

Even though the Church might not be directly involved, the Holy Spirit brings to fulfilment God’s plan and desire to save all of humanity by a mysterious relationship to the Church. John Paul II explains it thus: “For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by
virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his Sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free cooperation” (36). What is still open for clarification is whether or not the church exercises an instrumental causality in the salvation of all of humanity (37).

Conclusion

In this brief article I have attempted to show the capital importance of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s declaration Dominus Iesus for the understanding and teaching of ecclesiology. It must be noted that the Declaration has attempted to clarify major points in theological discussion concerning the universal salvific mediation of the Church. It has also been demonstrated that we cannot speak about ecclesiological issues without first considering the Christological foundation for these. Like all balanced ecclesiology we cannot consider Christ apart from his role in the Trinity since all Christian theology must be clearly Trinitarian theology. This means then that any ecclesiology needs to be a “communion ecclesiology” based on the model of the koinonia of the inner life of the most blessed Trinity. God’s creating and saving activity is an expression of this inner perichoresis that flows over into time.

Many voices were raised in reaction to the publication of the CDF’s Declaration. In most cases the criticisms raised have been voiced mainly because there was not sufficient reflection on what the document attempted to do. In the face of a rampant relativism (some even expressed by Catholic theologians) the Congregation has presented a serious attempt to correct and to explain the tenants of Catholic theology concerning the truths of the Incarnation and
revelation as these are expressed in authentic Catholic theology and how these are to be received by the faithful. In addition, the soteriological dimension of these need to be incorporated accurately in the teaching on the role of the church in its relationship to the Kingdom of God. The Declaration concludes that theories that deny the unique relationship which Christ and the Church have with the kingdom of God are indeed contrary to Catholic faith. It is necessary that in the teaching of ecclesiology Catholic theologians must make very clear the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in this regard as expressed in *Dominus Iesus*.

**Endnotes**

5. JOHN PAUL II, “The Purpose of ‘Dominus Iesus’,” *Origins* 30, 19 (October 19, 2000) 299. Cardinal Ratzinger also defended the document against its many critics. In an interview published in the October 8th issue of Osservatore Romano, the Cardinal expressed “sadness and disappointment that public reactions, with some praiseworthy exceptions, have completely ignored the true theme of the Declaration....The document is meant to be an invitation to all Christians to open themselves again to the recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord and, in that way, to give the Holy Year a profound significance.” Even if its tone and language were problematic, “the text should be explained, not despised,” he insisted. See “Ratzinger Defends Dominus Iesus,” *National Catholic Reporter* (October 20, 2000) 10.

9. Pius XII in his encyclical Mystici corporis (DS 3821) confirms the teachings of Thomas Aquinas that an implicit desire for baptism would suffice if a person were inculpably ignorant of their obligation to belong to the church. Hence the necessary role of the church in their salvation would be satisfied by a desire which was implicit in their readiness to obey the will of God in their regard. The famous case of Fr. Feeney who rigidly interpreted extra ecclesiam nulla salus was resolved by the opinion of the Holy Office in 1949 as not representing Catholic teaching (DS 3866-3873).

10. LG 16: “Ii tandem qui Evangelium nondum acceperunt, ad Populum Dei diversis rationibus ordinantur” (emphasis added). The text cites Aquinas’ teaching as mentioned above cf. S. THOMAS, Summa Theol. III, q. 8, a. 3, ad 1.

11. LG 14 and 15.

12. LG 48; GS 45; AG 1. See the use of the term “sacrament” applied to the Church in LG 1. The sacramental understanding of the church is probably best understood by the concept of “mediation.” As H.Urs von BALTHASAR has said about mediation: “...what is manifested in a given manifestation is always, at the same time, the non-manifest” The Glory of the Lord. A Theology of Aesthetics. Vol. I: Seeing the Form (San Francisco/New York: Ignatius/Crossroads, 1983) 442). The risen Christ cannot be an object possessed but his life-giving presence is in his church. His being-absent (“cancellation”) is the condition of his pluriform objectification (church) to whom he has left the position of “subject” in as much as He is the author, at the same time as the “missing one” and the “promised one”. In this paradoxical context of the relation of the church to Christ and his presence in the midst of the community of believers that we can say that “the church is the universal sacrament of salvation” (LG 48) at the same time manifesting and actualizing the mystery of the love of God for man and woman (GS 45) and we can speak of a sacramental mediation of the church in the access to Christian life.


14. Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Vol III, Pars II (Vatican: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1974) 335. It must not be overlooked that the communities that have their origin in the separation that
took place in the West are not merely a sum or collection of individual Christians, but they are constituted by social ecclesiastical elements which they have preserved from our common patrimony, and which confer on them a truly ecclesial character. In these communities the unique Church of Christ is present, albeit imperfectly, in a way that is somewhat like the presence in particular Churches, and by means of their ecclesiastical elements the Church of Christ is in some way operative in them.


16. In the response to the fifth question the CDF clearly states that it is because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood that hinges every other conclusion concerning the Eucharist that does not permit Catholic doctrine to acknowledge these communities with the proper appellation “Church”, see CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, “Responses to Some Questions....,” op. cit., response to the fifth question. Cfr. also Dominus Iesus, §17.


18. See Mystici corporis Christi, n. 14, and Humani generis, n. 44. Pius XII had actually used the term “Roman” Catholic Church.


21. The interpretation of those who would derive from the formula subsistit in the thesis that the one Church of Christ could subsist also in non-Catholic Churches and ecclesial communities is therefore contrary to the authentic meaning of Lumen gentium. “The Council instead chose the word subsistit precisely to clarify that there exists only one ‘subsistence’ of the true Church, while outside her visible structure there only exist elementa Ecclesiae, which ‘being elements of that same Church’ tend and lead toward the Catholic Church” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Notification on the Book “Church: Charism and Power” by Father Leonardo Boff: AAS 77 [1985], 756-762).

26. This same conclusion is supported by D. VALENTINI, see “L’unicità e unità della Chiesa,” *op. cit.*, 114f.
33. Ibid., 326.
34. Ibid., 327.
35. *LG* 16. See also paragraphs 14 and 15.
37. See nn. 21, 22 of the Declaration which attempt to clarify this mysterious relationship to the Church by stating it to be a “truth of faith.” Does this mean that the “universal mediation” of the church must be understood in this fashion? Theologically it would be more appropriate to use the language of universal sacrament of salvation to express this mediation as H. Urs von Balthasar has done, see note 12 above. It would seem best to understand this grace sacramentally in the light of the Eucharistic offering for the salvation of the whole world as in the context of grace being made available to those who have not yet heard the Word of God proclaimed.
Women at Work
A Catholic Feminist Theological Perspective

Barbara Riviello-Guerin

Women’s Work in the New Testament

“The whole of Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, has much to say to the Church and to humanity about the dignity of women and their vocation” (Pope John Paul II, August 15, 1988, No. 2).

This chapter will focus on biblical affirmations of women’s work in and after the life of Jesus as depicted in the New Testament. The description of women in the life and times of Jesus will be primarily drawn from the gospel of Luke. Next Paul’s interpretation of the role of women in the authentic Pauline letters will be explored in the light of the culture and societal norms at the time.

In terms of sheer quantity, Luke has more material about women than any of the other gospels: forty-two passages, of which twenty-three are unique to Luke (Schaberg, 1998, p.367). Luke wrote this gospel to convince the Gentile Christians in the Roman Empire that Christianity is a viable, genuine religion which is not harmful or in opposition to the Roman order. Luke appears unwilling to sacrifice for women the reputation and perhaps the future of the Church he was trying so hard to defend. Luke can be expected to do what he does, namely, to side with the standards that will be more culturally acceptable in the Roman culture in which he was working to ensure the Church’s survival. This would have included certain expectations
about the behavior of pious and good women (Getty-Sullivan, 2001, p. 195).

Among the likely sources for this gospel are the gospel of Mark, a written collection of sayings known also to the author of the gospel of Matthew, and some other sources that were used by Luke alone. It has been proposed that Luke may have had access to a woman’s source – a collection of stories and teachings perhaps written or preserved by women and providing insight into women’s experience of the Jesus movement. The following passages focusing on women are often thought to be part of this collection (All Scripture references come from the New American Bible, 1992): sections of the infancy narrative, particularly chapters 1 and 2 featuring Elizabeth, Mary of Nazareth, and Anna; the raising of the son of the widow of Nain (7:12-17); the forgiven prostitute who anoints Jesus (7:36-50); Galilean women who follow Jesus (8:1-3); Martha and Mary (10:38-42); the woman crying out from the crowd (11:27-28); the bent woman (13:10-17); the parable of the sweeping woman (15:8-10); the parable of the persistent widow (18:1-18); the daughters of Jerusalem (23:27-32); the women at the cross (23:49); and the women preparing spices (23:56) (Schaberg, 1998, 364).

In the gospels there are more references to women independent of their marital status than to women within the context of their role as wives. For example Luke 8 starts with the list of women “who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities” and traveled with Jesus, paying the bills at inns and eating places. Only Joanna is identified as the wife of someone. In Luke 10 Jesus visits with his two unmarried friends, Mary and Martha, and as shall be explored later, Jesus points out that the less-domesticated Mary has chosen the superior role (Malcolm, 1982, pp. 141-142).

Recognizing that the principle statement made about the women in Luke 8:1-3 is that, just like the Twelve, they accompany Jesus, there is an additional fact about the women in the last clause of the passage. In addition to accompanying Jesus, the women provide the financial support for the group; they “provided for them out of their
own resources.” Luke 8:3 indicates that the financial needs of the group were supplied by the women among them. These women were likely single people (unmarried, widows, divorced) because women who were married would not likely have braved public condemnation for leaving their husbands to follow Jesus. This is supported by the fact that Joanna is the only woman whose husband is named and described by Luke (Bauckham, 2002, pp. 113-119).

Of particular interest to the scriptural study of women’s vocation is Luke 11:27-28: “While he was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, ‘Blessed is the womb that carried you, and the breasts at which you nursed.’ He replied, ‘Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.’” The woman’s comment takes the form of praise of the mother who had brought Jesus into the world, with the implication that motherhood is what made Mary blessed. Earlier in the gospel Jesus had said that motherhood is subordinate to the spiritual relationship open to all people when he told his disciples, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it” (Luke 8:21) (Karris, 1992, p. 958). It was not Mary's biological function which gave her distinction, though by it she bore Jesus himself. What was more important to Jesus was to hear God’s word and to observe it. Though the birth of Jesus gave dignity and meaning to the function of childbirth, Mary's status as a person was not just the result of her role as a mother. Throughout Jesus’ life Mary was there supporting her son. Now her role as childbearer is de-emphasized, replaced by that of believing disciple. She was first and foremost a hearer and a doer of God’s word (Kroeger & Evans, 2002, p. 576).

Jesus clearly rejected the notion that the only proper place for women was in the home. One example of this is recorded in Luke’s gospel in the description of a visit of Jesus to the home of his friends Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). Martha busied herself with preparations to make Jesus and his companions feel welcome while her sister, Mary, sat at Jesus’ feet to listen to him teach. Besides the fact that Martha wanted help with the preparations, it was
remarkable for first-century Palestinian Judaism that a woman would assume the posture of a disciple at the master’s feet” (The New American Bible, 1992, p. 119). To sit at someone’s feet was a rabbinic phrase indicating studying with that person (Swidler, 1979, p. 192). Martha asked Jesus to intercede on her behalf and tell Mary to get up and help with the “woman’s work” but Jesus replied that the “one thing needed” at that moment was to listen to what Jesus had to say. He did not ask Mary to get up and go about the domestic duties. He applauded Mary for choosing “the better part.”

Jesus challenged the arrangements of the biological family, not only in his attitudes toward his own mother, but also in his dealings with the women who left everything to follow him. The disciples were a mixed group of male and female followers. This apparent challenge to normative family arrangements continued into the early church. Christianity offered new choices to those who heretofore had no choice about their state of life, i.e., slaves, wives, and the poor. One of the main choices offered by Christianity to women was the choice not to marry. In the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline letters, women mingle freely with men as they share in the evangelization of the Mediterranean world (Malone, 2001, pp. 56-66).

Much of what the Catholic Church has come to believe about the role of women in church and in society is based on the writings of St. Paul. The positive attitude of Jesus towards women clearly affected the early followers of Jesus, though patriarchal social structures by no means disappeared. Nevertheless, women played leading roles in the early Christian communities.

Prisca (also known as Priscilla) and Aquila represent a Christian couple modeling equality and partnership in marriage, business, education and the church (Getty-Sullivan, 2001, p. 123). Acts 18:2 discloses that “they were tentmakers by trade.” In Romans 16:3 Paul calls Prisca and Aquila his “co-workers.” According to 1 Corinthians 16:19, Aquila and Prisca had a “church at their house.” Prisca was a co-worker with her husband, she was well educated, and her name is mentioned first which speaks to her greater prominence in the
Christian community. She had a household and a tentmaking trade in Corinth, she likely had another tentmaking business in Ephesus, and she likely did not have children, as no children are mentioned in any of the references to her or her husband (Getty-Sullivan, 2001, pp. 154-161).

Twenty-six persons are mentioned by name in the closing chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans, eight of whom are women, including Prisca. In fact, the list begins with Phoebe whom Paul calls a “minister (in Greek, diakonos) of the church” (Romans 16:1) and of whom he said “she has been a benefactor to many and to me as well” (Romans 16:2). Chrysostom, a fourth-century church leader, commented about both Prisca and Phoebe, “These were noble women, hindered in no way by their sex…and this is as might be expected ‘For in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female’” (as cited in Bristow, 1988, p. 57). Romans 16:7 states, “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my fellow prisoners; they are prominent among the apostles and they were in Christ before me.” It is noteworthy that Junia is not characterized by being wife or sister to Andronicus. She is a person in her own right, a relative of Paul’s, a Christian before him and, what later caused commentators much more difficulty, a prominent apostle. (Malone, 2001, p. 71) Chrysostom had no doubts regarding Junia’s value, stating, “Oh, how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should even be counted worthy of the appellation of an apostle!” (as cited in Bristow, 1988, p. 57).

One of the most oft-quoted New Testament passages in support of the equality of men and women in the Pauline church is Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

A picture of the relationship among the Christian community is given in Galatians 3:26-29 where Paul draws on baptismal language to remind the Galatians that they had “clothed” themselves “with Christ” at their baptism (Galatians 3:27). As the act that marked a person’s entrance into this new covenant community, baptism was a
unifying act. Unlike circumcision, which involved only males, this sign of membership was one that included all human beings, men and women, who are all now “one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Their former claims based on race, gender, or station in life no longer matter (Kroeger & Evans, 2002, p. 686).

Why, with such a clear difference in attitude between Jesus and the Pauline writers did the church “fathers” not emphasize Jesus’ message but the negative Pauline and deutero-Pauline writings to base the teachings about women’s work and vocation which is so prevalent in Catholic Christianity today? How did Paul become the arch-male-chauvinist of the Bible upon which so many barriers to women’s equality in the Catholic Church would be based? It happened because those who first quoted Paul and interpreted his writings were products of centuries of Greek philosophy. They understood Paul from the viewpoint of a culture which maintained the inferiority of females to males. In so doing, they interpreted Paul’s writings from a perspective that was Greek and pagan rather than one based on the model exemplified by Jesus (Bristow, 1988, pp. 1-3). The tendency to interpret Scripture from the viewpoint of Greek philosophy was given its highest expression in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274). In so doing, the Greek deprecation of women became solidly infused within Christian theology (Bristow, 1988, p. 29).

The receding eschaton imminently awaited by Paul and the other early Christians played a role in the declining status of women in Christianity. As long as the parousia, the Second Coming of Christ, was expected at any moment, there was little need to develop any new social structures. But as that expectation faded, the need for organized structures of community life increased. These Christians naturally turned to the structures of the societies in which they lived for models of organization. In following this Greco-Roman model, the church set up authority structures that almost entirely excluded women.

It is ironic that by turning towards the subordination of women and the resulting restrictions imposed upon their vocations in society
and in the Church, the Magisterium has turned away from Jesus and his inclusive attitude and has instead relied on the Greek philosophical influenced interpretations of the writings of St. Paul.

**Women and Work in Catholic Tradition**

This chapter will compare and contrast the writings of the Catholic Church regarding the nature and meaning of work with the writings of the Catholic Church on the nature and meaning of women’s work. The research will demonstrate that the Church’s teaching on the importance of all work as vocation “and the demands that its meaning be known and assimilated in order to help all people come closer to God…” (Pope John Paul II, August 15, 1989, No. 23) is not consistent with the Church’s teachings on women’s work as being fundamentally and intrinsically tied to her vocation as virgin or mother. The writing of the Magisterium from 1891- present is the foundation upon which this analysis is based. In this chapter, the term Magisterium will refer to “particular groups of teachers whose authority is grounded in their office, as in the case of the pope and the other bishops” (McBrien, 1994, p. 65).

Recognizing that “man even before the Fall was not destined to be wholly idle,” (Pope Leo XIII, May 15, 1891, No. 27) Pope Leo XIII wrote extensively on labor, specifically on the condition of the working classes, in his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* which marked the beginning of Catholic social teaching. He affirmed that no one should be ashamed of making a living by toil because “Although [Jesus Christ] was the Son of God and God himself, …he did not disdain to spend a great part of his life at the work of a carpenter” (Pope Leo XIII, May 15, 1891, No. 37). Similarly, in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council wrote that Jesus Christ ennobled the dignity of work by his own labor. Through work, a person is “associated with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ” and “can exercise great charity and be a partner in bringing divine creation to perfection” (Pope Paul VI, December 7, 1965, No. 67).
In 1986 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop’s (USCCB’s) pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All* stated that “the road to holiness for most of us lies in our secular vocations” (National Council of Catholic Bishops, November 13, 1986, No. 25). To affirm this position, the bishops used the term vocation 24 times in the letter in reference to farmers, politicians, managers, business people, investors, and financiers, in addition to the Christian vocation to the “call to holiness in the world” (National Council of Catholic Bishops, November 13, 1986, No. 336).

In general, Magisterial writings demonstrate a deep ambivalence about the religious value of women’s work outside the home. In a speech to newlyweds in 1941, Pope Pius XII outlined his basic stand on woman’s role and position in society. According to Pope Pius XII, her competition with men in school and sports may hamper a modern young woman's ability to yield to the subjection of her husband. She ought to be wary of voices suggesting she is his equal or superior. She must not react like Eve, causing herself to lose the path to happiness now and hereafter. In addition, when women found some meaning outside the home, the tendency to limit the number of children was a constant threat: “A cradle consecrates the mother; more cradles sanctify her, and glorify her in the eyes of her husband, her children, the Church, and the nation... The heroism of motherhood is the pride and glory of the Christian wife” (Pope Pius XII, 2001, p. 155).

Unfortunately, in the midst of World War II fewer women sought such glorification. During World War II the work of many women moved from the home to the factory. As the war ended, Pius XII joined the ranks of job-worried males calling women back to their proper place in the home. Not to do so would be to betray her true mission and to forfeit her dignity as a woman. The hard-sell paid off and women went home in droves. As Pope Pius XII stated:

> Is it not an ageless truth – a truth rooted in the very physical conditions of a woman’s life... -- that the woman makes her home and takes care of it and that
the man can never replace her in this? This is the mission which nature and her union with man has imposed on her for the good of society itself. Entice her away, lure her far from her family with one of the many attractions that vie to overcome and conquer, and you will see the woman leave her family hearth untended...For all practical purposes the home will cease to exist... (Pope Pius XII, 2001, p. 153).

In the 1960’s feminism emerged as a profoundly influential societal movement. During this turbulent time Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council in 1962. The theme of the Council was aggiornamento (Ford, 2006, p. 11), which literally means "getting up to today." The Church was being urged to "update" itself. (Foley) Pope John XXIII acknowledged, in his 1963 encyclical Pacem in Terris, that women were now taking part in public life, including the workforce outside the home. Nevertheless, he stated that “Women must be accorded such conditions of work as are consistent with their needs and responsibilities as wives and mothers” (Pope John XXIII, April 11, 1963, No. 18).

Pope Paul VI, who succeeded Pope John XXIII, was the second Pope of Vatican II. He left behind the patristic stereotypes of woman as inferior but he reinforced the romantic idealization of woman reminiscent of earlier popes of the century (Bowers, 1971, p. 30). Pope Paul VI described true women’s liberation in the wake of the 1960’s women’s movement not as equality with men but recognition of true feminine personality – the vocation of a woman to become a mother (Daly, 1973, p. 3). Many Catholics expected to see the church as a champion of women, primarily on account of the Second Vatican Council’s strong defense of human rights. His closing speech to the Second Vatican Council in 1965, publicly recognized the contributions of women in all states and ages of life: young girls, wives, widows, mothers, consecrated women and single women
living alone. He acknowledged that “the vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved” (Pope Paul VI, 1965). However, when speaking about women, the Council documents maintain an understanding of women’s status and vocation in the church and in society based primarily upon her relationship to men (Luckman, 2006, pp. 85-86).

Magisterial teaching concerning women in the 1970’s presents a mixed picture. Pope Paul VI advocated the cultural, economic, social, and political advancement of women in his 1971 apostolic letter A Call to Action but stated that “Developments in legislation should … be directed to protecting her proper vocation…” (Pope Paul VI, May 14, 1971).

In his 1981 encyclical Laborem Exercens, Pope John Paul II wrote, “man’s life is built up every day from work, from work it derives its specific dignity” (Pope John Paul II, September 14, 1981, No. 1). He also stated that “the general situation of man in the modern world, studied and analyzed in its various aspects of geography, culture, and civilization, calls for the discovery of the new meanings of human work.” (Pope John Paul II, September 14, 1981, No. 2) Pope John Paul II also wrote, “through work man is to fulfill the calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity” (Pope John Paul II, September 14, 1981, No. 6).

Gregory Baum’s commentary on Laborem Exercens states:

Since the encyclical constantly speaks of man, of his labor, and his destiny without indicating that “man” is used generically and that “his” always includes “her,” the papal message may have a slightly alienating effect at least on North American readers. However, in some contexts, and I believe in this one, it is important to retain the term “man” as a generic reference…“man” is always to be understood as
referring to both men and women… (Baum, 1982, p. 7).

Baum’s assertion of the assumed inclusivity of the term “man” is not supported by other Magisterial writings on women. The Magisterium consistently focuses women’s calling to domesticity and does not acknowledge the possibility of women pursuing a vocation outside of motherhood or virginity. In so doing the Magisterium limits a woman’s vocation to virginity and motherhood and does not recognize that this may not be what all women are called to do.

In his 1981 encyclical *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II wrote that the “original and irreplaceable meaning of work [for women is] in the home and in rearing children (Pope John Paul II, November 22, 1981, No. 23). The Pope admonished “the mentality which honors women more for their work outside the home than for their work within the family” (Pope John Paul II, November 22, 1981, No. 23) and stated that “society should create and develop conditions favoring work in the home” (Pope John Paul II, November 22, 1981, No. 23). Pope John Paul II’s theology of work for women is limited to the view of women’s nature being intrinsically tied to domesticity. Hence, for Pope John Paul II, the true vocation for women lies not in the laboratory, the courtroom, the classroom, or the conference room, but in the home.

In 1983 the American bishops undertook an initiative to write a pastoral letter responding to women’s concerns titled “Partners in the Mystery of Redemption.” The first part of the letter, “Partners in Personhood,” examined sexism, which it treated as sinful. The second part of the letter, “Partners in Relationship,” examined sexuality and the family and called men to take seriously their responsibility in procreation and parenting. The third section, “Partners in Society,” urged employers to abide by fair hiring practices and to provide equal pay for equal work. The last section, “Partners in the Church,” recommended the prompt study of the roles of women in liturgical ministry. The bishops’ task was to address
contemporary needs, being mindful of tradition but moving it forward in response to the signs of the times. The bishops held various hearings with women and incorporated women’s voices into the first draft of the letter. The document was prepared by a committee of six bishops and five women consultants. Susan Muto, professor of literature and spirituality at Duquesne University, was principal author of the text (Donovan, June 8, 1988, p. 564). The letter underwent four revisions over a nine-year period. On November 18, 1992 the letter went to a vote of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and was voted down, making history as the first time that bishops failed to approve a pastoral letter that came before them for final action (Wall, December 2, 1992, 839). The final version of the letter was criticized as having “alienated everyone” (Wall, December 2, 1992, 839). By the time it met the standards of conservatives in the United States and at the Vatican, many women had criticized the letter for distancing the Church “from the women who have spoken to us during the past decade” (Murphy, 1992).

In 1988 Pope John Paul II wrote Mulieris Dignitatem in response to the recommendation of the 1987 Synod of Bishops to study “the anthropological and theological bases that are needed in order to solve the problems connected with the meaning and dignity of being a woman and being a man” (Pope John Paul II, August 15, 1988, No. 1). In Mulieris Dignitatem Pope John Paul II limits the two dimensions of women’s vocation to motherhood and virginity. Pope John Paul II holds up Mary as the model whom all women should strive to emulate by stating that “the biblical exemplar of the ‘woman’ finds its culmination in the motherhood of the Mother of God” (Pope John Paul II, August 15, 1988, No. 19). This is understandable because Catholicism holds that Mary possessed both aspects of women’s vocation – virginity and motherhood. Hence, like Mary, women should develop characteristics that will enable them to live their “true vocation” to the fullest.

The Vatican’s 2004 Letter to the Bishops on the Collaboration of Man and Women in the Church and in the World stated that “although
motherhood is a key element of women’s identity, this does not mean that women should be considered from the sole perspective of physical procreation” (Ratzinger, May 31, 2004, No. 13). From this one might conclude that the letter recognizes that women’s vocations might lie in “positions of responsibility which allow them to inspire the policies of nations and to promote innovative solutions to economic and social problems” (Ratzinger, May 31, 2004, No. 13). However, by offering the alternative Christian vocation of virginity to women the letter refutes “any attempt to enclose women in mere biological destiny” (Ratzinger, May 31, 2004, No. 13). The letter affirms that “women should be present in the world of work,” (Ratzinger, May 31, 2004, No. 13) but goes on to state that “it cannot be forgotten that the interrelationship between these two activities – family and work – has, for Catholic women, characteristics different from those in the case of men” (Ratzinger, May 31, 2004, No. 13).

In 1968 radical feminist Mary Daly spoke against motherhood as women’s only vocation. “Some women have difficulty being defined by motherhood alone. If work reward[s] men in society, women might also enjoy respect for their professional excellence” (Daly, 1968, p. 113). In addition, systematic theologian Francis Schüssler Fiorenza wrote that “Theology must appropriate the Christian tradition to give meaning to work within the modern situation” (Fiorenza, 1980, p. 96). Hence, the changes in women’s work demand combining respect for a woman’s role in the family with a woman’s desire to find meaning in her vocation in the workplace as well. A theology of work for women must be developed based on the Church’s belief that men and women are equally human persons since both were created in the image and likeness of God and that the “promotion of women within society must be understood and desired as…humanization” (Ratzinger, May 31, 2004, No. 3).
Contemporary Catholic Women at Work

The religious significance of women’s work must be tested against the reality of women’s lives as revealed in today’s lived experience. Interpreted theologically, signs of the times arise because God continues to act in and through human history (Johnson, 2002, p. 46). The church therefore needs to look at the world to discover God’s designs for women at work in the present time. Since history is the place of ongoing revelation, naming the rise of women in the paid labor force as a “sign of the times” locates this challenge in the here and now.

Monsignor John Augustine Ryan (1865–1945), in an address to educated Catholic women in 1915 stated that, compared to men, “woman is less individual and more domestic because both her functions and her limitations make her so” (Ryan, 1915-1916). In making these claims concerning women and domesticity Ryan was well aware that multitudes of women did work outside the home. In 1910 he noted that eight million women were engaged in gainful occupations. At the time Ryan wrote, women constituted close to 25 percent of the industrial workforce. More than one-third of wage-earning women and three-quarters of those living at home helped to support other family members (Ryan, 1921).

When the United States entered World War II, 12 million women (one quarter of the workforce) were already working and by the end of the war, the number was up to 18 million (one third of the workforce) (Campbell, 1984, p. 100). Although there was there was a change in the image of women during World War II, it was only superficial and temporary. The reality was that most women returned to being homemakers during the prosperity of the 1950s. However, the road taken by women in the work force during World War II continued into the future. Society had changed.

In the two decades after World War II, the U.S. economy enjoyed a major expansion, coupled with increases in productivity, higher standards of living, and rapid acceleration in the growth of college
enrollments. Rapid economic growth vastly increased the demand for labor. The civil rights movement, legislation promoting equal opportunity in employment, and the women’s rights movement created an atmosphere that was hospitable to more women working outside the home. The combination of all of these factors created strong inducements for women to join the workforce, significantly affecting their participation rate.

The number of women in the labor force rose from 18 million in 1950 to 66 million in 2000, an annual growth rate of 2.6 percent. The share of women in the labor force grew from 30 percent in 1950 to almost 47 percent in 2000, and the number of working women is projected to reach 92 million by 2050—on the basis of an annual growth rate of 0.7 percent (Toosi, 2002, p. 18).

The latest annual data published by the U.S. Department of Labor Women’s Bureau cites the following statistics: (‘‘United States Department of Labor Women’s Bureau’’)

1. In 2012 women’s participation in the labor force accounted for 57.7% of the working age women population in 2012, compared to 70.2% participation rate for men.
2. Between 2010 and 2020 the number of women in the labor force is expected to increase at a rate of 0.7 %, compared to 0.6 % for men.
3. The labor force participation rate of mothers with children under 18 years of age was 70.5% in 2012, 75.1 % for mothers with children 6-17 years of age, and 64.8% for mothers with children under 6 years of age, 61.4% for mothers with children under 3 years of age, and 57% for mother of infants (2012 annual averages).
4. The labor force participation rate for unmarried mothers with children under 18 years of age was 75.2% in 2012, and 68.3% for married mothers –spouse present -with children under 18.
5. In 2012, 73.7% of employed women worked full-time (35 hours or more) and 26.3% worked part-time, compared to 86.7% and 13.3% of employed men, respectively.

By keeping modernity at bay, the men who run the Catholic Church have willfully ignored one of the great achievements of the modern age: the integration of women in the workforce and public life. The theologian must locate the experience of women as a source for theological reflection in the development of a theology of work for women. Anne M. Carr warns that one must be cautious not to absolutize any particular set of experiences or any single interpretation as the experience of women (Carr, 1988, p. 118).

All women’s work has meaning for God – whether that work is changing a diaper or changing a company’s strategic direction, whether that work is preparing a meal or preparing a financial statement, whether that work is writing a grocery list or writing a computer program. God is glorified in the boardroom as well as in the nursery, in the laboratory as well as in the kitchen, in the corporate office as well as in the church office. The drastic changes in the kind of work which women now do are based on a profound longing to be different kinds of persons, full human beings who uniquely image God.

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About the Editor

**The Very Reverend Dr. John Moses, KCVO**, is Dean Emeritus of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, where he served from 1996 to 2006. In 2013, he joined the faculty of the Graduate Theological Foundation as John Macquarrie Professor of Anglican Theology. He is an Anglican priest who has held a variety of parochial, diocesan and cathedral appointments in the UK, including his years as the Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral, London. Opportunities to lecture and to learn something of the life of the church in other countries have taken him to Hong Kong, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and the United States. His publications include books on atonement theology (*The Sacrifice of God*), church-state relations (*A Broad and Living Way*), the spirituality of the desert (*The Desert*), the life and writings of John Donne(*One Equall Light*), and an anthology for private devotion on prayer (*The Language of Love*). His book on Thomas Merton (*Divine Discontent: The Prophetic Voice of Thomas Merton*) will be published in the summer of 2014. He holds the degree of a Doctor of Philosophy from Nottingham University and honorary doctorates in recognition of his work from Anglia Ruskin University (Doctor of the University), Nottingham University (Doctor of Divinity) and GTF (Doctor of Divinity). His academic interests – reflected in part in his publications – include church-state/church-community relations, the practice of ministry, atonement theology, John Donne and Thomas Merton.
Contributors

Howard Avruhm Addison
Gershom Scholem Professor of Jewish Spirituality (GTF)

Dennis J. Billy, C.Ss.R.
Karl Rahner Professor of Catholic Theology (GTF)

Beatrice H. Broder-Oldach
Student at the Graduate Theological Foundation

David B. Couturier, OFM. Cap.
Dean R. Hoge Professor of Pastoral Planning and Church Management (GTF)

Marie S. Dezelic
Student at the Graduate Theological Foundation

Gabriel Ghanoum
Student at the Graduate Theological Foundation

Robin Gibbons
Alexander Schmemann Professor of Eastern Christianity (GTF)

C. Anthony Hunt
E. Franklin Frazier Professor of African American Studies (GTF)

Diane Kreslins
Student at the Graduate Theological Foundation

Ronald W. Langham
Student at the Graduate Theological Foundation

William Moneyhun
Student at the Graduate Theological Foundation
John H. Morgan  
Karl Mannheim Professor of the History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences (GTF)

Jeremiah N. Murasso  
Robert C. Leslie Professor of Logotherapy (GTF)

James F. Puglisi, SA  
Francis Joseph Cardinal Spellman Professor of Catholic Theology (GTF)

Barbara Riviello-Guerin  
Student at the Graduate Theological Foundation