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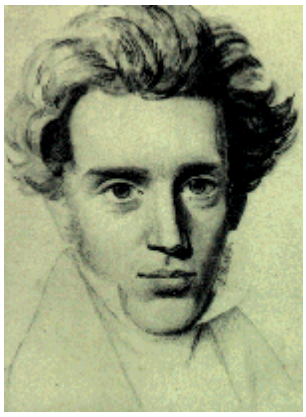

Søren Kierkegaard

Edification

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE SOCIETY FOR CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

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Website Information

For more information about Christian Psychology, including articles and discussion groups, visit the website at:

www. Christianpsych.org

Welcome to the first issue of *Edification*, the newsletter of the Society for Christian Psychology. As the reader will see, this is a modest venture in many ways. We are beginning anyway because we think that small beginnings are better than none, and because we think the time may be ripe for some organized discussion regarding the project of a Christian psychology.

The title of the newsletter is a word from the subtitle of Soren Kierkegaard's classic work *Sickness Unto Death*: "A Christian Psychological Exposition for Edification and Awakening." Kierkegaard saw himself as doing Christian psychology, and he serves, therefore, as an inspiration for the Society. Of course, he does not fit current stereotypes of a psychologist, since he was neither an experimental psychologist nor a counselor. His daily life was spent largely in writing, and he wrote to help Christians become more earnest and faithful. He sought to edify his readers and awaken them to the ways in which they were less than fully Christian and to point them to a more radical kind of Christianity. To further these aims he wrote a few works that he considered were psychological in nature. For Kierkegaard this meant they promoted a kind of "critical introspection" (Evans, 1990) that subjected the reader's meanings and self-understanding to a thorough questioning. To aid the reader in this agenda, Kierkegaard engaged in some rich theorizing regarding the structure, activity, and development of the human self, largely based on his own self-awareness and reflection on human nature. What makes his work so important for the Christian community is its self-consciously Christian character. He studied and wrote about human nature from the standpoint of a Christian belief-system and his own Christian understanding and experience. For this reason, Kierkegaard could be called the father (or perhaps the grandfather) of Christian psychology.

For Kierkegaard the term translated "edification" (or upbuilding) simply meant the building up and strengthening of the individual Christian and the body of Christ. We hope that this newsletter will serve such a purpose. We also hope it will further the goal of the *construction* of a psychology (including counseling and psychotherapy) that is distinctively Christian. We believe that Christian psychologists and counselors must read the best psychological work available, whatever the source, since the vast majority of good psychological research and theory-building has been done outside the Christian community. However, we also believe that in some of the most important areas of psychology (motivation, personality, psychopathology, therapy, and social relations) a Christian world-view (and heart) will lead to a significantly different way of interpreting human phenomena, so much so that a qualitatively different psychology (or set of psychologies) will result.

We invite you to join us in a communal dialogue as we seek the leading of the Spirit to guide us into all psychological truth. Please write us and tell us what you think of what you read. We also invite you to consider joining the Society for Christian Psychology (by logging onto the website, www.christianpsych.org), so that you can be a regular participant in this kind of dialogue.

Reference

Evans, C.S. (1990). *Soren Kierkegaard's Christian psychology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Christian Psychology: Its Recent Beginnings

By Keith Whitfield and Eric Johnson

The task of sketching the origins of a new way of thinking about psychology presents many difficulties. One of the challenges regarding describing the beginnings of Christian psychology pertains to the definition of "Christian psychology." The term is most often used as a vague designation of the work of Christians who teach, write or practice psychology and counseling, regardless of their approach. A "Google" search of the term produces hundreds of sites where the term "Christian psychology" is used in this generic way. (Interestingly, many of the hits are websites of persons who oppose Christians who participate in psychology and decry "Christian psychology"!). The assumption of this article is that there is a qualitatively distinct use of this term that refers to a relatively novel approach to psychology that is still in its infancy, having only been around, in its contemporary form, for the past 15 years. One of the proponents of the Christian psychology movement, the philosopher Robert Roberts (2000), has written that psychology, generally speaking, is a:

> coherent body of thought and practice (a system), at least partially articulate[d], for understanding, measuring, assessing, and possibly changing people's emotions, thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors, and their dispositions to these. It will typically posit or assume some conception of the goal or purpose of human life, or the basic drives and problems of human life, or at least the proper functioning of some special part of the person (such as the perceptual organs), and it will have some conception of how a person develops, properly or improperly, toward the achievement of that goal, the satisfaction of those drives, the solution of these problems or that proper functioning. It will accordingly also have some conception of the obstacles to a successful development and of the configuration of emotion-, thought-, perception-, and behavior dispositions that result from unsuccessful development. (p. 152)

The term "psychology," for Roberts, is not restricted to referring to the experimental science that was founded in the mid to late nineteenth century, but can refer to *any* body of knowledge that contributes to our understanding of human beings. This does not mean that he rejects the idea of psychology as a science, but he does not define it as a science that is necessarily secular and restricted to the findings of empirical research, which is the way *modern* psychology sees itself. Modern psychology is not so value-neutral as it has tried to be. The fact is that the author of every psychological study, article, and book approaches human nature from a particular standpoint. Among humans there will never be a general psychology that everyone can agree upon, because human research requires the assumption of world-view beliefs that cannot be empirically demonstrated. So every psychological text is an expression of a particular *version* of psychology that assumes certain world-view beliefs. As a result, rather than referring to psychology in general, it is necessary to have the term psychology prefaced with a classifying adjective. Consequently, Roberts (among others) is advocating a "Christian Psychology" where "Christian" functions as a meaningful modifier. Christian psychology is simply the *Christian* version of the discipline; *modern* psychology is the mainstream *secular* version. Presumably, besides these two, there are as many versions of psychology extant as there are world-views. (In fact, we must acknowledge that, even within a single world-view, there will often be a plurality of sub-versions, e.g., there are actually a number of secular approaches to psychology, e.g., naturalistic, humanistic, post-modern, buddhist).

"Since Christianity has always been concerned with understanding human nature, Christian psychology, in some sense, is as old as the Christian faith…"

Since Christianity has always been concerned with understanding human nature, Christian psychology, in some sense, is as old as the Christian faith, and Roberts has noted that the Christian tradition possesses a rich and deep body of knowledge for this enterprise. Thus, one way to describe Christian psychology would be to trace what Christians have thought through the ages regarding human nature.

We will take the easier task of limiting our description to the more recent development of Christian psychology as a self-conscious approach to psychology in the late 20th century. During the 1960's and 1970's many evangelical Christians became more involved in the field of psychology (e.g., James Dobson, Bruce Narramore, Gary Collins, Tim LaHaye, and H. Norman Wright). They began to write popular books for Christians on the issue of parenting, marriage, self-image, and personal and spiritual growth. Knowing something of the value of modern psychological research and theory-building, for the most part these Christians in psychology relied on adapting that work to the Christian community: rejecting the blatantly secular and evolutionary assumptions in the work and applying the rest to the needs of Christians and the church. They termed this kind of work "integration."

The integration approach has had its critics, for example, Jay Adams who argued that integration ends up incorporating too much secularism into its understanding of human nature by its predominant reliance upon modern psychology, rather than the Bible. However, a few psychologists have also raised questions about the compatibility of modern psychology with Christianity, but without rejecting it entirely the way Adams and others in the nouthetic and biblical counseling movements have done. Two of the most important are Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen and Paul Vitz.

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Van Leeuwen, a social psychologist, offered a sustained critique of secular psychology's view of the person and pointed towards a psychology of the person that assumed a Christian worldview, rather than subscribing to the view of human beings developed by mainstream empiricist psychology. In *The Person in Psychology* (1985) she argued that the Christian worldview offers a way of seeing the person in light of the doctrines of creation, the fall, and redemption. Furthermore, she noted that the secular psychology has a systemic weakness in its often unacknowledged philosophical assumptions that put blinders upon what secular psychologists can see. Finally, Van Leeuwen advocated making a shift in psychological study from a sole reliance on natural science methods towards the use of human-science methods, and a greater openness to insights from philosophy, religion, and other humanities. She wrote,

> Throughout this volume and particularly in the final chapter I have suggested that because psychology is becoming more open to the development of a human-science paradigm, Christians should be challenged to greater activity in the field. I have pointed out that our acceptance of scriptural authority should be an advantage, not an impediment, to such a task—but not because Scripture gives us a complete anthropology that can substitute for systematic psychology . . . But Scripture does tell us enough about the ultimate origin, nature, and destiny of human beings to give us a set of control beliefs by which we can critically evaluate existing psychological theories and help to formulate more adequate ones (1985, p. 256).

Paul Vitz's concerns have been complementary to Van Leeuwen's. (She favorably cites a number of his earlier works in her book). Vitz's 1977 book, *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship* (reprinted in 1994) presents a short, but hard-hitting critique of secular personality and counseling theory. While acknowledging some of their strengths, he pointed out how many of the humanist assumptions of Maslow, Rogers, Horney, and Fromm are antithetical to a Christian world-view. In 1987 Vitz published *Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious*, a marvelous example of the psychoanalysis of Freud that uses Christian interpretative assumptions, rather than Freud's naturalistic assumptions in interpreting Freud's views of God and religion. Based on Freud's written works and letters, Vitz attempted to show how one could explain some of his ambivalence and hostility towards God as a result of his upbringing in a dysfunctional Jewish family and his exposure to Catholic Christianity in Vienna. Published by a mainstream press (Guilford), the work demonstrated one could do top-notch psychoanalytic writing (on the founder of psychoanalysis!) from an avowedly Christian standpoint. More recently, Vitz did similar analysis of a number of modern thinkers in *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism* (2000). In addition, in a number of articles Vitz has explored the use of narrative in psychology and its value for a Christian approach as well as developed psychoanalytic theory along Christian lines. He contributed a chapter to *Limning the Psyche*, called "A Christian Theory of Personality," where he made some initial progress in articulating what a Christian theory of the personality might look like. While teaching most of his life at New York University, he recently became a senior scholar at the Institute for Psychological Sciences, an expressly Catholic psychology graduate program.

It was left to two philosophers, however, to begin advocating explicitly for a Christian psychology. C. Stephen Evans was the first person in recent years to argue for an expressly Christian psychology. He made this case in *Wisdom and Humanness in Psychology: Prospects for a Christian Approach* (1989). In this book, Evans defines Christian psychology as "psychology which is done to the furtherance of the kingdom of God, carried out by the citizens of the kingdom whose character and convictions reflect their citizenship in that kingdom, and whose work as psychologists is informed and illuminated by Christian character, convictions, and understanding" (p. 132). In this book, he follows an Augustinian approach where faith becomes transformative to one's intellectual understanding. A noted Kierkegaard scholar, he also had published a popular exposition of one kind of Christian psychology in *Søren Kierkegaard's Christian Psychology*. There he summarized some of the rich psychological insights that are found in Kierkegaard's works, demonstrating how Kierkegaard could be a good role model for those interested in doing Christian psychology.

"I have suggested that because psychology is becoming more open to the development of a human-science paradigm, Christians should be challenged to greater activity in the field."

Robert Roberts has been perhaps the most active in seeking to advance a Christian psychology. He taught for many years in the philosophy and psychology departments at Wheaton College, but currently teaches philosophy at Baylor. He has written a number of journal articles that attempted to analyze psychological topics or theorists from a Christian standpoint. In 1993, he wrote *Taking the World to Heart: Self and Other in an Age of Therapies*, that critically engaged a number of secular personality or clinical theories and offered some initial correctives from a Christian framework. A year later, he was awarded a large Pew grant to explore psychological topics like personality, the emotions, and the virtues from a Christian perspective. A portion of the grant was used to invite a small group of scholars (theologians, philosophers, and psychologists) to Wheaton College for a symposium on

Some Basic Structures of Personality for a Christian Psychology

By Robert Roberts

As I have read the Bible looking for psychology, six basic structural characteristics of human personality have stood out. These are (1) that human beings are verbivorous, (2) that we are agents with limited freedom, (3) that we have an "inward" dimension highly important for personality, (4) that our selfhood is determined by what we love, (5) that persons are permeable by other persons, and (6) that we associate or dissociate ourselves from parts of ourselves. These structures of the psyche will serve to explain how people's personalities develop – that is, how they come, as adults, to actualize their basic teleology or, on the other hand, to fail to actualize it, developing instead perversions of this in-built good.

Verbivorousness

In Deuteronomy 8 Moses tells the people that human beings do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Whoever feeds on the word of God lives; whoever does not take this word into himself, ruminate upon it, swallow it and digest it into his very psyche, starves himself as truly as he would if he quit eating physical food. Moses seems to have God's commandments especially in mind, but it is clear from other parts of Deuteronomy that stories – especially the one about the deliverance from Egypt – are food on which the people of God nourish themselves, come to know who they are, take on the character of God's people, and come to love the Lord with all their hearts and their Hebrew neighbors as themselves. And of course in the Old Testament the commandments and the stories are intertwined with many other forms of discourse: expressive exclamations concerning God's attributes, attitudes, and deeds in the Psalms and elsewhere; prayers, prophetic warnings and promises, proverbs, instructions for specific actions, explanations of people's behavior, allegories, parables, and much more. These are inseparable from what the postbiblical church calls "theology" – more or less didactic comments about God's nature and his relation to the human and nonhuman creation. In the New Testament the emphasis on the formative power of the word of God is just as strong, but now the word is the gospel, the word about Jesus Christ – which again has many of the forms just identified.

In being verbivorous, humans are unique among the earth's creatures. We have a different kind of life than nonverbal animals, a kind of life that we can call generically "spiritual." Since we become what we are by virtue of the stories, the categories, the metaphors and explanations in terms of which we construe ourselves, we can become spiritual Marxians by thinking of ourselves in Marxian terms, spiritual Jungians if we construe ourselves in Jungian terms, and so forth. It is because we are verbivores that the psychologies have the "edifying" effect on us that I noted at the beginning of this paper. They provide diagnostic schemata, metaphors, ideals for us to feed upon in our hearts, in terms of which our personalities may be shaped into one kind of maturity or another.

Our nature as word digesters suggests a partial explanation of our nature as God-needers. In distress about the very nature of the world, Solomon cries, "Vanity of vanities," and offers a diagnosis: He wouldn't feel this way were it not for his *wisdom.* And wisdom, in the book of Ecclesiastes, is the ability to take the world in whole, to see that a generation goes and a generation comes, that what has been is what will be, that there is nothing new under the sun, that all achievement succumbs to oblivion, that everything is swallowed up in death. (That is why his prescription is to imitate the animals: Eat and drink; enjoy your work and your spouse; you won't much remember the days of your life because God will distract you with simple joys. The prescription, however, does not seem wholly successful.) Solomon's yearning for immortality is not the Christian thirsting for eternal life; it is too crass for that, looking more for retention of property and achievements than for the "righteousness" of enjoying God and God's human creatures. There is an incompleteness here. We can see in Solomon's desire a perverse or immature expression of the need for God and his kingdom, whose mature and true counterpart is the hungering and thirsting for righteousness that Jesus refers to. But neither of these desires is possible for a being who cannot grasp its life as a whole, in conception or imagination; and this ability seems to depend on the ability to assimilate words in the construction of the self.

"Our actions not only express our character, but also form it, so that we contribute to the inertia of character by our own undertakings. We are thus responsible for what we are as well as for what we do."

Agency

On the biblical view of persons, we are self-determining agents, but our psychologically real options are bounded by the inertia of character (good or bad) and by facts (in particular, the structures of creation and the acts of God and other people). It is assumed that we are responsible for such "passions" as lust, anger, and covetous desire, on the one side, and love, compassion, and gratitude, on the other. Our actions not only express our character, but also form it, so that we contribute to the inertia of character by our own undertakings. We are thus responsible for what we are as well as for what we do. Our verbivorousness is a ground of our freedom, because possibilities of being and action otherwise inaccessible to us are presented in our speech and in our ruminations and digestions of it. Speech presents objects of love and hate, and reasons for both, and so make real potentialities of our hearts that would remain mere remote potentialities without it. The word of God enables us to see possibilities, without the seeing of which we would lack the real options needed for our freedom. We are liberated from our bondage to sin by a word of grace that declares we have been made righteous in Christ. And thereby actions

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become open to us that would otherwise have remained in the dark night of pure potentiality.

The narrative of a life, in the Pauline psychology, is a story of "slaveries" (Rom.6). Progress, or personal growth, is a movement from one slavery to another: from being slaves of sin to being slaves of righteousness. In between is something like the "free will" so highly regarded by our contemporaries, the power of *basic* self-determination. (I stress "basic" because Paul does not hold that very good or very bad people are *generally* slaves in their agency; both the saint and the reprobate have many options, but they do not have the option of choosing to be good or evil.) In Paul's view moral free will is a transition, helped along by a kind of action that he calls "yielding" (παριστανα ι), from having unholy "passions" to having holy ones. Having been struck to the heart by the gospel, yet without having been fully sanctified, I am neither a complete slave to sin nor a complete slave to righteousness. My affections are indeterminate enough that I can "go either way" – sin still has its attractions, but so does the life of the kingdom. Thus I have free will with respect to good and evil (though even the good that I choose may be tinged with evil desires). Having one foot in each world, I am in a position to yield to the one *or* the other, in a way that the reprobate, whose mind is totally darkened by sin, cannot, and the saint, who can no longer see any attraction in the life of sin, cannot either.

This demotion of the freedom of moral choice to the status of an interim condition far short of the ideal contrasts with a prominent ideology in our culture, which makes the individual, in the ideal case, one who at every moment freely chooses his own destiny and his own self. In the interest of such freedom Sarte (1956) is willing to make us a "nothingness." Rorty (1989) revels in the "contingency" of the constitution of our selves, and Frankfurt (1988) makes freedom of the will a matter of *our* choosing whatever will is to be our own. By contrast, in the Christian psychology we are always a "somethingness" because we are always in love with something, either for good or for evil – to be a person at all is to be formed, to have character, inertia, and dispositions. Our true nature is not contingent, but established in the order of creation and the nature of our God; and perfect freedom is so to love God and his kingdom as to be slaves who "can do no other."

Marital chastity is one way of being a slave of righteousness. The chaste married Christian (as contrasted with the merely self-controlled person) does not choose chastity anew each day, does not decide whether or not she will be faithful to her spouse. Instead, she has been so "gripped" by the vision of life in God's kingdom, she so loves righteousness, the life that God has called her to, that she finds the prospect of marital infidelity positively repugnant. If she finds it repugnant not just occasionally and depending on circumstances, but steadily and regularly and independently of circumstance, then chastity is a Christian virtue in her. It is part of the constitution of her self, and it means that in this respect, at least, her will is not free: she cannot (psychologically) choose unrighteousness, for she is a slave of righteousness.

The radical behaviorists, in contrast with the radical libertarians, deny that we are agents at all: we are just conditioned responders to the stimuli that impinge on us from our environment. This psychology seems to depend on systematically ignoring that as verbivorous we are seers of options, transcenders of our environment with their stimuli, beings who can "play" with the stimuli, investing them with indefinitely many different meanings.

Inwardness

In addition to an "outward," publicly observable dimension – our body, with is "behaviors" – we have a less publicly observable dimension, the character of which we can often hide, at least in part, from our fellow human beings. In this inward dimension, which the Bible calls the "heart" or "mind," are found our wishes, cares, intentions, plans, motives, emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and imaginings. Jesus is critical of people who put on an outward show of virtue, but whose inwardness is corrupt (Matt. 15:1-9), and he commends behaviors that minimize the temptation to do for public display and human praise what should be done out of honor and obedience to God (Matt. 6:2-6, 16-18). God discerns the states of our hearts and rejoices in our pure thoughts and proper motives (I Pet. 3:3-4). God's word (Rom. 10:8), as well as Christ himself (Gal. 2:20), can be "in" a person's inwardness (more on this below). Proper personhood as actualized in the Christian virtues, by consequence, is not merely a set of dispositions to behave properly, but above all a rightly qualified inwardness – patterns of thought, wish, concern, emotion, and intention shaped by the Christian story and the truths about God, ourselves, and the world that follow from that story.

"Proper personhood as actualized in the Christian virtues, by consequence, is...above all a rightly qualified inwardness...shaped by the Christian story and the truths about God, ourselves, and the world..."

Our second basic structural feature of human nature was the fact that we are agents, beings who undertake actions and do so with a degree of freedom and responsibility. Most of the "mental events" that I have mentioned as constituting our inwardness might seem classifiable as passions rather than as actions. But I think the biblical psychology doesn't distinguish strictly here. When Jesus says that it's what proceeds from a person, rather than what enters him, that corrupts (Mark 7:14-23), he seems to suggest that at least some of the evil thoughts, coveting, licentiousness, envy, pride, etc., are states we produce voluntarily. In most cases it would be going too far to say that emotions and wishes are actions, but still, they often result from our actions, and we can intentionally foster or curb

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them. (Perhaps Paul refers to this when he speaks of "yielding.") Some of these actions will be purely "inward" – not at all behavioral. For example, if I find myself lusting after a woman, and intentionally dispel this urge by reflecting on my marriage vows and remembering some wonderful things about my wife, or by attending to God's presence within me, my action may have no behavioral element at all. On the other hand, if my children (or I) are short on that inward reverence for nature that forms part of the Christian virtue of stewardliness, I may foster it by getting us out into the dirt in the springtime, nurturing a little plot of nature and watching it grow. Here inwardness is served by outward behavior.

The Bible doesn't speak thematically about unconscious mental states, though we might take some encouragement from the fact that dreams play a significant role in a number of biblical narratives. If a chief mark of our inwardness is its potential to be hidden, then unconscious mental states have a double claim to this status – they are likely to be hidden not only from others but also from ourselves (see Jer. 17:9). A Christian psychology will countenance unconscious mental states because they are so useful in explaining things: emotional phenomena, the effectiveness of self-examination, the unacknowledged drive to worship God, and the phenomena of self-deception that are so important to a psychology of sin, to mention just a few things.

"A Christian psychology will countenance unconscious mental states because they are so useful in explaining things…"

Attachment

The Bible emphasizes that personality is determined by the character of what one loves. This point is most succinctly summed up in Jesus' comment, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). Your heart is your inward self, your personality, the actual "you"; and what you treasure – what is important to you, what you love, what you are centrally attached to – determines what that self is like. This seems to suggest that a self is not "self-contained," on the Christian psychology, but is essentially oriented to things "outside" itself, whether these be healthy or unhealthy objects of its absorption. If we conjoin this structural feature with the first two basic directions of human nature – the needs to live in harmonious fellowship with God and our fellow human beings – we can see that the double commandment that you shall love the Lord with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself is not just an "ethical" command, but a prescription for psychic health, for fulfillment of our psychological nature. Since the most worthy object of praise is God, it stands to reason that the fully developed self will be oriented to God by a love commensurate with its object; God is the one who ought to orient a person's *whole* life, and is thus the one who must be loved with *all* your heart. "A second [commandment] is like it": You shall also be oriented by the goodness that is in your neighbor. The neighbor is of course not good in the way God is; his goodness derives from God's. But each of us seems to have a native disposition to see goodness in himself, and the commandment is saying: See that same goodness in your neighbors; care about them in the way you care about yourself, and in this too you will find yourself.

We can see how central, absorbing attachments have ramifications throughout the personality if we think of personality as dispositions of what I earlier called "inwardness." Emotions are construals of the world in various kinds of terms (depending on the grammar of the emotion in question) *as they impinge on some care or love of the subject* (see Roberts, 1988b; for analysis of how some emotional dispositions enter into the constitution of virtues, see Roberts, 1992a). Desires, urges, and wishes, insofar as they are characteristic of a person, also reflect underlying commitments and directed concerns. Our loves also direct our plans, our thoughts, our imaginings. (For more analysis of the concept of attachment see Roberts & Talbot, 1997.)

Self-association and Self-dissociation, and Permeability

I shall treat the fifth and sixth basic structures together, since they are so closely interwoven. One striking feature of the New Testament psychology is the willingness to multiply selves, to speak of the new self and the old self, the "inmost self" and the "flesh," etc. Another, related feature is that one person can permeate or be "in" another: Christ can be "in" the believer, the believer can be "in" Christ, Christ is "in" the Father, the Father is "in" Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells "in" the believer. At one point, Paul talks almost as though Christ's self replaces his own as he becomes more sanctified: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). But in the sequel he makes it clear that he has not really disappeared, ceding his body to a reincarnated Christ: "And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." So it is Paul who lives after all, but it is a different Paul, who associates himself with Christ who is now "in" him. The Paul who lived independently of Christ has died (though as we will see in a moment, he is still present, dissociated from Paul).

Heinz Kohut's concept of a self object (Kohut & Wolf, 1978) gives us a model for understanding how one person can dwell in another. In interacting with our parents, we take them into our self, into our "heart," to use Paul's word. As potential selves, we are hungry for a sense of our own worth, and in their approval, their empathy, their enthusiasm for us, we see our worth "mirrored." We are also hungry for orientation in "moral space" (the term is borrowed from Taylor, 1989), for a sense of the direction of our life, a sense of what we are to be and do. By

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identifying ourselves with our parents, we get a free ride on their ideals (see Roberts & Talbot, 1997). In these ways, we "incorporate" our parents into our psyches. In Jesus Christ God presents himself to us as accepting, merciful, forgiving, nurturing, respectful, empathic – as a "mirroring self object." We come to see our value reflected in God love. Thus we become a self in a quite different way than we would be apart from the gospel; our self is *constituted* of God's regard for us. At least, this is one of our selves, on the Pauline psychology, indeed the truest one, the one with which we ought to associate ourselves. And the bestowal of this self does not just satisfy a generalized need to be loved but the specific need to be loved by God. As God thus dwells in our hearts, we become spiritually his children. In being addressed with God's love and thus identified as God's children, we are also called to do his work, to live a certain life, to pursue certain goals. "…. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *provided we suffer with him*…." (Rom. 8:17). In this too we identify ourselves, and thus are formed as selves, in his terms. God our Abba becomes to us an ideal-bearing self object as well. We take on God's goals as our own, and thus find in ourselves divine value and divine orientation, a self that was not there before. It is clear that the self object – human or divine – "dwells in" us in this sense through the power of association, because we associate ourselves, identify with, the divine or human parent. As Christians we grow by associating ourselves with the new self that has been created by God's loving address.

We see the phenomenon of self-association at work in marriages as well. A young husband will find that he has two selves, an old bachelor self that is uncommitted, unattached; and a married self that belongs to this particular woman. Each self has its own behavioral – and emotional – response repertoire, its own sense of identity. The young husband may find himself, at certain moments, confused about which set of dispositions to associate himself with and may have to "yield" to the one or the other. This yielding may be by default, or he may quite intentionally choose *not* to "go with the flow" and choose instead to associate himself with his wife and his married self. As the marriage matures, and he matures as a husband, his unmarried self will die or at least fade to a mere ghostly presence. A negative example of the phenomenon is the son who keeps seeing, to his dismay, traits of his father in his demeanor and affect, and consciously dissociates himself from them, saying to himself, as it were, "that's not me, not the *real* me." Part of my point is that this need not be "denial" in the sense of dishonesty; it may, instead, be a creative or constitutive denial, an act that brings about a psychological reality: that these dispositions inherited from the father gradually cease to be part of the individual's real self.

I think that Kohut's neo-Freudian psychology can help us understand one person's indwelling another, but the biblical concept also differs significantly from his. The Gospel of John talks volubly about the Father being in the Son and the Son in the Father, and the Father and the Son being in the disciples, and the disciples in the Father and the Son. But the one relationship that is not described in terms of indwelling is that between ordinary human beings; in the NT, indwelling always involves at least one divine person. We do not hear of Paul being "in" Barnabas, or anybody's mother or father being "in" him, etc., though of course Christians are "members one of another," and this comes close to some idea of being "in" one another. I think we have to admit that the parent does not *really* indwell the child; it is rather the child's *impression* of the parent, in the form of impressions of memory, that is carried off by the child, and with which the child may or may not associate himself. This impression is a disposition of construal, disposing the child to construe himself, as well as both his actual parent and other "parent figures," in certain ways. When Jesus (John) and Paul speak of Christ dwelling in us, or us dwelling in Christ, or Christ dwelling in the Father or the Father in Christ, the expression is not metaphorical. It is Christ who is in the Father, and the Father himself who is in Christ, and it is Christ himself who dwells in us. This is possible because Christ is God, and God can be literally and always present to or in anyone; while human beings, when they are absent from one another, can only be "present" to one another in some metaphorical sense. Thus the indwelling of Christ or the Holy Spirit is a kind of fellowship, a real present relationship between God and the believer.

"Thus we become a self in a quite different way than we would be apart from the gospel; our self is constituted of God's regard for us."

Indwelling, then, seems to have the following characteristics: (1) it is a positive relationship between two or more distinct individuals; (2) in Pauline and Johannine usage, at least one of the individuals must be divine, though we can imagine a metaphorical extension of the concept to relationships between mere human beings, (3) the identity of each individual is profoundly and centrally affected by the indwelling (or "indwelling") of the other(s); (4) somewhat more speculatively, the indwelling is conditioned on the indwelt person's associating himself or herself (voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or unconsciously) with the indwelling person.

Thus Christ indwells people who associate themselves with him, and thus with the new self that loves Christ and regards itself as loved by him. But when Paul speaks of sin dwelling in him (Rom. 7:7-25), he dissociates himself from it. Two Pauls coexist here, one that delights in the law of God and wants to do the good, and another that is in servitude to sin and lacks respect for the law. The one Paul is a "body of death" to the other. But there is no doubt which one is the real Paul: "I myself serve the law of God." He even goes so far as to suggest that he himself is not sinful, but is derailed by an alien power: "Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it,

An Interview with Robert Roberts

What is Christian psychology?

Personality theories and clinical models typically depend on background beliefs about the nature of persons and the nature of the reality that persons inhabit (that is, the rest of the universe). You might, for example, think of persons as highly individualized beings whose purpose in life is to find their own individual essences, to affirm that and actualize it and be conscious of it and enjoy it; such theorists will tend to think of social constraints as unhealthy impositions that divide us from ourselves, and for this reason they also shy away from any God who might make demands on us. Or you might think of persons as rational hedonistic egoists who are forever calculating how to get the most pleasure out of life, but who often make mistakes in calculating what is best for their own happiness. Or you might think of people, as Christians do, as having a Creator who has laid down some blueprints for the good life, including some expectations for what kind of community we live in and how we relate to one another, blueprints from which we have all deviated and which we cannot conform to except in a Savior whom God has also sent to reconcile us to himself. A Christian psychology is a developed account of the nature of human persons, of what they need to be to be complete and of the various ways they deviate from their own completeness and of the various remedies that God has put in place for their condition. All this is explored by reference to the Bible and other parts of the Christian tradition.

"A Christian psychology is a developed account of the nature of human persons, of what they need to be to be complete and of the various ways they deviate from their own completeness and of the various remedies that God has put in place for their condition."

What led you to believe that Christian psychology was a viable project?

For sixteen years I taught in the clinical psychology program at Wheaton College, where my job was to teach courses in the "integration" of psychology with Christian thought and practice. When I made my own efforts at integration and looked at the efforts of others, it seemed to me that a necessary preliminary to integration was to understand the psychology of the Christian tradition, which has really been developed rather deeply by people like the desert fathers and Saint Augustine and Jonathan Edwards and Søren Kierkegaard and many others. It is also surprising how much psychology you find in the writings of the Apostle Paul, and in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, for instance. It seemed to me that most Christians trained in psychology programs — both secular and Christian — were quite well trained in some of the modern models and knew a bit of Sunday School theology, but were quite ignorant of the rich tradition of psychology within the church. In fact, most people don't even recognize it *as* psychology when they see it, even though it is answering many of the questions that professionally trained modern psychologists attempt to answer. So when these people try to do integration, they are overwhelmed by their knowledge of modern models and the Christian tradition of psychology gets very short schrift. It seems to me that we would do well to concentrate on figuring out what the Chrsitian tradition has said, and try to develop that further, as a basis for the project of integration — or even just for its own sake, even if we make no effort to integrate what we learn with modern models.

What in your training has contributed to your work in Christian psychology?

I have had a long-time interest in the writings of Søren Kierkegaard, who is one of the deepest Christian psychologists in the tradition. Also, I have tried to read certain key parts of the Bible with a concerted effort to ask psychological questions of them. I think that my training as a philosopher and theologian has made me somewhat more willing to listen when the Christian tradition makes psychological observations that are in friction with some of the reigning ideas in the psychology establishment. People with professional psychological training have often been so deeply socialized into professional ways of thinking about persons that they are simply deaf to some of the things that the Christian tradition says — about sin, for example, and the appropriateness of hating yourself. The principle that it is always wrong to hate yourself is very deep in present-day secular psychological thinking. But Blaise Pascal, for example, is very clear that self-hatred can be an appropriate and healthy attitude. Many psychologists would just dismiss this as sick Christianity or a Christian sickness. But the Christian psychologist will want to take it seriously and explore it.

It's obvious from your other work that you believe the writings of Christian thinkers down through the ages will have an important role to play in Christian psychology. But what is the role of scientific research in the development of a Christian psychology?

One obvious way that scientific research can contribute is to test Christian claims, or perhaps better, to test claims that might seem to be implied by Christian psychology — since it is not clear just how many correlational or causal claims the tradition actually makes. Claims about the psychological efficacy of prayer, the correlation between depth and maturity of faith and psychological health, and the efficacy of Christian psychotherapy relative to that or other therapeutic modalities, would be examples.

An Interview with Robert Roberts

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So, how important do you think scientific research is for the development of Christian psychology, compared with philosophical reflection, historical research, and biblical exegesis?

The main work of Christian psychology, as I see it and practice it, is constructive — that is, just trying to figure out what the Christian tradition *says* about psychological questions. This is a primarily hermeneutical or interpretive task, a matter of reading the tradition carefully and trying to clarify and perhaps systematize what it says. For this part of the task, scientific research is less important than historical and biblical research. Philosophical training contributes by sharpening one's conceptual and interpretive abilities, but I don't think it would be wise to give much weight to the particular psychological opinions of philosophers, unless the philosopher in question is explicitly expounding the Christian tradition, as is the case with Augustine, Pascal, and Kierkegaard.

How would a thoroughly Christian model of counseling differ from secular versions?

In *Care for the Soul*, edited by Mark McMinn and Tim Phillips, I developed a kind of therapy that I call "Pauline psychotherapy," since it derives from psychological concepts found in the letters of the Apostle Paul. Pauline psychotherapy posits two personalities in the "client," one being the old self that has lots of bad and dysfunctional character traits, and the other being the "client's" new self in Christ, which has such traits as hope,love, rejoicing in God, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and so forth. God gives Christians this new self as a free gift. Paul also has a number of concepts of "self-transformative action," such as "yielding" (one's members to Christ), "walking" (in the Spirit), "taking off" (one's old nature) and "putting on" one's new nature, "putting to death" (the old self), and so forth. In Pauline psychotherapy, the therapist helps the "client" to understand herself in terms of her new and old selves, and then uses various techniques to facilitate the "client's" performing the self-transformative actions that Paul commends in his letters. This psychotherapy makes biblical concepts central to the "client's" self-understanding and therapeutic actions. The goal is to help the "client" with whatever problems she comes complaining of, but to do so in a way that fosters a Christian personality transformation rather than a Rogerian, cognitive-behavioral, Jungian etc. formation.

Some Basic Structures of Personality in a Christian Psychology

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but sin which dwells in me" (v. 20). Most of us do not experience sin as such an alien principle, because we do not dissociate ourselves so radically from the sin as Paul does. We "dwell in" it, uneasily perhaps, or with only one foot; but we identify with it to some extent. And the reason for this, I think, is that we do not associate ourselves as strongly with Christ as Paul does. It is Paul's passionate seriousness about Christ, and the strong sense he has of belonging to Christ, of being "in" Christ, that gives him the impression that sin does not belong to him – that is, not to the real Paul, not to Paul's "inmost self." And this is not just Paul's "impression," but a true perception of Paul's situation, a perception of it from God's point of view.

These six features – verbivorousness, agency, inwardness, attachment, association/dissociation, and permeability – are among the central "structures" of personality as it is conceived in the Bible and especially in the New Testament. These are the "mechanisms" by which personality is formed, for better or worse.

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a Christian understanding of psychology. The product of this meeting was a collection of essays published in *Limning the Psyche: Explorations in Christian Psychology*. Roberts himself contributed two essays, one of which, "Parameters of a Christian Psychology," is a seminal outline of a Christian approach to psychology that is probably the most useful summary of the possibilities of a Christian psychology yet published. In another chapter he discussed how attachment theory can be reconceptualized from within a thoroughly Christian framework. Most recently, Roberts was a contributor to the book *Christianity and Psychology: Four Views* (Johnson & Jones, 2000), where he represented the Christian psychology position and interacted with representatives of the three other main evangelical approaches to psychology and counseling.

In addition to these scholarly initiatives, a number of clinically oriented authors have written books at a more popular level for people seeking to grow psychospiritually or for counselors of such people that show the potential of Christian psychology to impact the church more broadly, including Larry Crabb (*Finding God; Shattered Dreams; The Pressure's Off*), Dan Allender (*The Healing Path; The Cry of the Soul; Bold Love* with Tremper Longman III), Leeane Payne (*The Healing Presence; Healing Homosexuality*), Benedict Groeschel (*Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development*), Sandra Wilson (*Released from Shame; Abba's Child*), and Diane Langberg (*On the Threshold of Hope; Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse*). Though not using the label "Christian psychology," these psychologists and counselors have shown how much of a difference a thoroughly Christian approach to counseling can make in dealing with various kinds of soul-struggles. And there are likely other authors who ought to be included in this list that have been left off unwittingly.

The recent spate of books published promoting evangelical spirituality and spiritual direction also seem closely related to the agenda of a Christian psychology (e.g., Gary Moon's *Homesick for Eden*; Dallas Willard's *Renovation of the Heart*; Jeannettee Bakke's *Holy Invitations*; David Benner's *Care of Souls* and *Sacred Companions*), but the commonalities and linkages between these movements have not yet been much traced.

We are also aware of five schools that hold promise for contributing to Christian psychology and training counselors in this type of approach. Dan Allender and his colleagues at Mars Hill Graduate School in Portland, Oregon have developed Masters and certificate programs that aim to teach a specifically Christian version of counseling. IGNIS (also known as the Academy for Christian Psychology) is a Masters degree granting school in Kitzingen, Germany, established 17 years ago for the purpose of developing an explicitly Christian approach to people-helping and psychological theory. The Institute for Psychological Sciences in Arlington, VA is attempting to develop a genuinely Catholic approach to counseling in their Masters and Doctoral programs. The Psychological Studies Institute (two sites in Atlanta, GA and Chattanooga, TN) has developed two Masters programs that combine Christian counseling and spiritual direction, and some of their faculty promote the agenda of a Christian psychology. Eric Johnson at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky is also attempting to train Masters and Doctoral students in a thorough-going Christian model of counseling.

Before concluding, it must be acknowledged that because this approach is so new, there is much diversity among the various individuals and schools mentioned and no one should misconstrue this essay as suggesting there is really a unified movement. Rather, thus far, there have been a number of persons who have been working towards a Christian psychology project without very much awareness of others doing likewise. It is hoped that this article (and this newsletter and the Society) will help to bring together some of these various efforts (along with others that are attracted to this agenda), so that there can be more concerted dialogue about what Christian psychology and counseling might look like.

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SBTS Box 952
2825 Lexington Road
Louisville, KY 40280

Phone: 502-897-4223
Email: info@*christianpsych.org*

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Contributors to this issue: Robert Roberts, Eric Johnson, Keith Whitfield.

Edification's Staff: Eric Johnson, Louis Belva, Lia Vassiliades, Keith Whitfield, Dee Reju, Josh Creason.

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