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A Neophyte's Theory of Psychotherapy

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The following should read much like a personal diary. It documents, metaphorically, what I am taking with me on my journey into the mental healthcare profession. And, as in all such trips, I can anticipate acquiring new and exciting treasures along the way. Herein, I will list the contents of my “bags” and explain their intended purposes. And obviously, because I am only now launching myself into this field, I cannot predict what wealth I will discover along the way.

As I make my departure toward the practitioner’s horizon, I leave possessing only a fundamental knowledge of a few of those who are the mantle of revered therapists; of whom are accredited with developing psychology into an esteemed and credible science. Interestingly, I have already experienced some dismay on this quest. The knowledge I have acquired has attenuated my confidence in not only the theories proposed by these pioneers but also the veneration given them. In fact, I have learned very little to distinguish psychology, the science, from the nebulous mysticism of ancient esotericism.

Consequently, I project that my newly milled theory will be incontrovertibly juxtaposed against those that are presented as the bedrock of this applied science. What will follow herein is the map I intend to use to guide me as I embark on this well-traveled course.

Moreover, throughout the following, I will interject biblical scriptures as the sinew of the assumptions I use to construct this theory. I use the Bible as the authority for these formulations, believing that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2Timothy 3:16) As important, being that it is the word of God, I believe His guidance to be all sufficient. “His [the Heavenly Father’s] divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us

his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (II Peter 1:3-4)

### **Nature ~ Philosophy of Man**

I ascribe to a view of man that is derived from a Christian-theistic upbringing and a practicing faith. This ideology girds various assumptions that I have regarding mankind and gives rise to the way I define behavioral and mental problems and also sources of those problems. Accordingly, my theory's postulates are predicated on the words of the Holy Bible. Indubitably, using religious text as the template from which to build a psychological theory will be contentiously argued that such a proposition is incompatible with science. Interestingly, Gnostics and agnostics, whose psychological theories are equally value-laden, are not targeted for injecting their collective philosophies.

My view of man's nature is set apart from the “fathers of psychology”. These men embrace personal philosophies that are in stark contrast to my own. Of those, persons with a naturalist inclination argue that man is merely a highly evolved animal whose personality is simply the interrelation of physical and chemical properties that we do not yet understand. Additionally, they often explain behavior as simple evolutionary developments that lend themselves to survival; or embrace the Freudian psychology that suggests that man is comprised basically of biological drives and consequently subject to them; or even others, like B.F. Skinner, who propose that man is a mere responder to stimuli and controlled by his environment. A pantheist's view is likewise contrary because they propose that god is an infinite impersonal force that is in all that is the universe and that behavior cannot be relegated to good or evil since all is a part of god and all are god. Naturalists and pantheists are consistent with one another in that

there is no measure of good or bad either in individual behavior or cultural practices. This philosophy promotes a tolerance of all behaviors and fails to set parameters, which I believe leads man to self and corporate destruction. On the contrary, I believe that living in submission to God, and his will, allows man to experience genuine peace, satisfaction, and growth, but does not suggest a life experience free of sadness or hardship.

It is noteworthy to mention that my theory does assume that environmental factors, or physiological ones, will very likely have an effect on man's behavior. However, man possesses free will, or choice, and is ultimately in a position of authority over his own behaviors. Consequently, he is responsible for himself and his actions. I also believe that man's nature is "sinful" and therefore is more inclined to live outside the moral boundaries and thus expose him to conduits of personal dissatisfaction and destruction. Fortunately, because of man's ability to choose, he can elect to be redeemed by our Heavenly Father through his perfect son Jesus Christ, repent of his sins, submit to his authority and thus, experience a satisfying life, as Christ promised, "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

My theory also proposes that because of the impact of sin, not all humans possess the same capacity for learning, or objectivity, or even a commitment to avoidance of destructive lifestyles. Appropriately, and to the reader's surprise, this view posits that I am, as well as all therapists, simply unable to apply a method to "cure" or ameliorate the vast array of complications that a client could potentially experience. Resolution for the client will ultimately be determined between the client and God the Father. The client may be helped by the therapist, who as any Christian person is capable of doing, prays for the Holy Spirit's intercession and guidance, and requests the revelations of instruction to be derived from or be consistent with the word of God. The Holy Spirit and the Bible are the sources for this instruction and using the

Bible as the standard of measure for holy, and thus, salutary behaviors, affect, and cognitions, leads the client to overcoming these complications. The construed “weakness”, of the therapist in this particular theory is by our Creator’s design and purpose. In the Bible, the apostle Paul remarked, “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.” (1 Corinthians 1:27) Adding, “...”My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.” (2 Corinthians 12: 9) This design underscores God’s strength and clarifies that man’s wisdom is foolishness. Specifically, the Apostle Paul reminds us, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.”(1 Corinthians 1:25) This perfect design, and one adopted and included in this theory, insures that God is glorified, not man.

### **Basic Assumptions**

My newly formed theory is built upon the following assumptions:

- Mankind possesses a sinful nature, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23)
- Mankind, while on earth, will encounter strife as a result of Satan’s rule. “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” (1 John 5:19)
- The sinful nature is the source of maladaptive behaviors, cognitions, and affect. Evil desires are a part of every human being and promulgate the biblical concept of sin. Sin is the failure of man to obey God as man seeks out satiation of these desires. Sin is the

source of our anguish and separates us from the Father and ultimately leads us to death and suffering. (Isaiah 59:2; Acts 3:19; Romans 6:23; John 10:10)

- God has given man choice, commonly referred to as free-will, which is underscored by His exhortations to turn to God (Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 31:6; Ezekiel 14:6; Matthew 18:13; Acts 3:19), exhortations to repent of sin (I Kings 8:47; Matthew 2:3; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38), exhortations to believe (II Chronicle 20:20; Isaiah 43:10; John 6:29; 14:21; Acts 16:31) exhortations to be holy (Romans 12:1; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; 2 Peter 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:14; Galatians 5:13) and finally, exhortations to obey (Acts 5:32; II Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9).
- Wisdom in addressing sin or hardship is to be sought from the Lord, the Holy Spirit and the inerrant word of God, namely the Holy Bible. (Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; 8:14; 119:24; Isaiah 9:6; 11:2; 11:12; 28:29; 33:6 Micah 6:9; Job 12:13; John 14:16)
- No man may come to the Lord, and thus out of sin, except through the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, the holy and perfect Son of God. (John 3:16; Mark 14:61-63; John 7:28; 8:58; 10:7; 14:6)
- Reflection, thought, or human reason, are processes of the mind that can be constructive or destructive. (2 Timothy 2:7; Ecclesiastes 9:1; Isaiah 43:18; Philippians 4:8)
- Mere natural observation by man is not to be considered an authority of fact.
- True, validated science, that which follows scientific method or even other random discoveries, can be a legitimate source of knowledge, which can be used in treatment of psychological issues. However, the body of knowledge derived from study is to be

considered valid measure only when the Holy Bible is used as its standard. (2 Timothy 3:16; Romans 1:17-19; 1: 20; 2:1,15 2:14,15; Psalms 19:1-6)

- Any reported psychological ailment or physical behavior that is the result of a biological complication or abnormality is to be addressed by a physician. (Luke 5:31) However, if there is mental/emotional suffering that results from the physiological complication, it can and should be addressed.

### **Roles of the Therapist**

The therapist's role is to be conscientious and diligent as he works to help the client. There are a myriad of possible issues for which an individual may seek assistance. Clients may be dealing with grief, separation anxiety, compulsive thoughts, difficulties in relating with others, major life transitions, conflicts of the past, addictions, sexual complications, fear and so on. Furthermore, these issues are never presented the same way because each presentation is by entirely different human beings with their own signature variations. Consequently, I think it is imperative for a therapist to depend wholly on the guidance of our Heavenly Father from both his word, and that of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:4; John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7)

The role of the therapist is that of a helping peer, with no explicit or implicit representation of one who possesses any secret knowledge of the human mind, because doing so would simply be a misrepresentation of the truth. To be effective, however, it is imperative that the therapist insures that he is cognizant of his position as a member of the body of Christ, as well as to consider whether or not the client is a Christian. Furthermore, the therapist is to be mindful of his own relationship with Christ and to surrender to that authority, all whilst being vigilant about his own commitment to God's commandments. (Psalms 141:5; James 15:6)

In my theory, I believe a cooperative interaction between the client and the therapist is paramount to obtain a successful professional relationship, as well as to achieving the intended goals of therapy. The locus of the meeting is the client and thus, the therapist should focus his attention on that of the client's needs. The client, by the very nature of being one, is a person who is in need of one or all of the following: direction, advice, admonishment, encouragement, information, or respect. (Romans 11:8; 2 Corinthians 11:8; Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:16; 2 Corinthians 12: 12-30)

Because the mind is so multi-faceted, and the issues that arise in people's lives are so numerous, a therapist cannot, and should not expect, that he/she would be equipped or experienced sufficiently to address all of these matters. Just as medical doctors often specialize in certain types of medicine, the therapist should be sufficiently humbled by their own frailties to enlist the assistance of other persons, client willing, who likewise share in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the therapist is to work always with a concentration on his own walk with Christ to insure the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which will be indicated by the therapist's love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, self-control, patience and faithfulness. The therapist is to work in a spirit of love toward the client so that the hope of the client may be actualized. (Galatians 5: 22-23)

### **Roles of the Client**

The roles of the client are rather simple. It is not required that the client believe or accept any of the tenets of Christianity. The client needs only to seek assistance for the issue that troubles them or others. The client should not expect to meet with a therapist who is more concerned about ancillary matters, such as money, prestige or pride. The client will be informed of the therapist's faith and how that belief will be involved in the process of mitigating the

hardships the client is experiencing. The client will likewise be informed, if willing to listen, of the gospel of Jesus Christ in an effort to explain the relationship between sin and separation from God and their relationship to client's complications or behaviors that have been defined as disorders.

### **Goals of Therapy**

Ideally, during treatment, if the client does not already have a relationship with Jesus Christ, the therapist would hope to have participated either in planting a "seed" or participating in its "harvest", which would eventuate into the client's acceptance of Christ as his Lord and Savior. If the client already has a relationship with Christ, it is hoped that his walk with Christ will be strengthened and his focus sharpened on the one who gives us life.

It is important to imbue the client with a sense that he is esteemed because he is human, made in God's image, and that he is equipped to manage these issues with not only his own intellect, but also to enjoy the bracing and direction provided to him by the Heavenly Father and other potentially available support systems found in family, friends, and more importantly the "body of Christ". "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

Lastly, it is of equal importance to have provided sufficient tools, knowledge, support, love, encouragement, guidance, or admonishment that the client, by the grace of God, is able to overcome or manage that which he believed to be difficult, painful, or complicating his life.

### **Conclusion:**

To close, I must proclaim that my attention to this discipline found its thrust from a genuine interest in seeing other humans overcome the underpinnings that are associated with both individual and societal ills. I have a genuine interest in providing those who seek counsel with cogent solutions that will equip them to overcome these difficulties. As a “neophyte”, I had hoped that my education would conceive the elucidation of a formalized theory that rests on strong, persuasive evidence, so that I would be equipped to effectively respond to these issues, under which humans suffer.

Instead, I have learned from the textbooks used to teach psychology, which advocate these foundational theories, that there is limited evidence of their effectiveness, and even less support that any are more effective than their counterparts. Despite this, I know many humans attest to the significance of having a relationship with Christ. They, and I too, affirm the effect this relationship has had on our lives and how that relationship equipped us to deal with our cognitions, affects and behaviors. Resultantly, I have attempted to construe a theory on the premise of Christianity, which requires no specialized training and is employable by any and all persons, regardless of age, educational accomplishment, occupation, economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, language, custom, or physical ability.

It is my belief, based on the aforementioned assumptions, that psychological disorders are manifestations, or consequences of sin and/or evidence of separation from God. Leading people to Christ will bless them so that they may overcome these ailments. Unfortunately, I do not expect this theory to be received well by other practitioners, despite my confidence in its proposed success.

**Reference:** The New International Version Study Bible, Copyright 1985, The Zondervan Corporation