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## THE CONCEPT OF CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY (КОНЦЕПЦІЇ ХРИСТІЯНСЬКОЇ ПСИХОЛОГІЇ)

*У статті розглядається важливість формування цілісної картини людини. Для академічної психології видається важливим і необхідним врахування духовної складової у вивченні людини. При цьому духовна складова життєдіяльності психолога і психотерапевта в допомозі клієнту повинна бути розглянута як антропологічна потреба і необхідність. Виходячи з цього, в якості підстави ефективного процесу психотерапії розглядається християнська концепція психології, її методологічні засади з точки зору християнського світогляду. Аналізуються провідні підходи в психотерапії, її антропологічний аспект і пропонується цілісна картина людини на основі Біблійного розуміння в контексті її природи і життєдіяльності.*

**Ключові слова:** християнська психологія, психотерапія, академічна психологія, релігійна ідентичність, духовний досвід, онтологічна модель, прихований образ людини в психології ("hidden image of man in psychology").

*В статье рассматривается важность формирования целостной картины человека. Для академической психологии представляется важным и необходимым учитывать духовную составляющую в изучении человека. При этом духовная составляющая жизнедеятельности психолога и психотерапевта в помощи клиенту должна быть рассмотрена как антропологическая потребность и необходимость. Исходя из этого в качестве основания эффективного процесса психотерапии рассматривается христианская концепция психологии, ее методологические принципы с точки зрения христианского мировоззрения. Анализируются ведущие подходы в психотерапии, ее антропологический аспект и предлагается целостная картина человека на основе Библейского понимания в контексте его природы и жизнедеятельности.*

**Ключевые слова:** христианская психология, психотерапия, академическая психология, религиозная идентичность, духовный опыт, онтологическая модель, скрытый образ человека в психологии ("hidden image of man in psychology").

*This article discusses the importance of building a complete image of man. For academic psychology, it is important and necessary to take into account the human spiritual component. Psychological and psychotherapeutic spirituality is described as a necessary anthropological need. Based on this Christian conception of psychology, it is considered the basis of effective psychotherapy process: its methodological basis, the methodology from the Christian point of view. The main approaches to psychotherapy and its anthropological aspects are analyzed. The image of man on the basis of the Biblical understanding of man, human nature and the important aspects of life are presented.*

**Keywords:** Christian psychology, psychotherapy, academic psychology, religious identity, spiritual experience, the ontological model, hidden image of man in psychology.

### Introduction

The subject discussed seems to need an apology. Whenever I say that I am a representative of Christian psychology, I can hear caustic remarks such as "And does such exist at all?" or "Well, once, under the reds' rule there was Marxist psychology and now under the blacks' rule there will be a Christian one". I hope that the arguments for the necessity of the development of Christian psychology and its offer allowing to understand more profoundly man and help him make the most of his life will turn out to be strong enough for the target audience.

It is generally known that there is no single psychology. The majority of schools and research approaches justifies the question about their value and quality, their achievements and constraints. It is the constraints and deficiencies occurring in particular

research studies of modern psychology which prompt to look for still new attempts to understand man and help him. It is known that particular schools differ in the objective which they set to themselves, the subject matter of their studies or applied diagnostic and therapeutic methods. Taking these aspects into consideration I will attempt to demonstrate that the offer of Christian psychology is not only justified but also legitimate, essentially rich and methodologically correct.

If the manner of practising psychology is influenced by its material and formal subject-matter and the (anthropological and methodological) assumptions in the foreground as well as the researcher's attitude, then in Christian psychology each of these prerequisites is explicitly defined.

Schools and trends in the twenty-century psychology originated on one hand from the Enlightenment legacy.

The fruit of that period is the domination of empiricism and evolutionism in studies on man. On the other hand in the last decades the postmodernist trend characterized by its irrationalism (New Age) became extremely popular. In psychology these culture trends resulted in strong empiricism and the domination of psychometric approaches in the so-called academic psychology, and in an extreme freedom in the area of impact on man: from ecological strategies of medicine men through psychotechniques, which are taught to managers and traveling agents, to diversified psychotherapeutic techniques: from psychoanalysis, through Gestalt to neurolinguistic programming.

Undoubtedly the importance of the results of many studies in the area of psychology is significant and unquestionable. However mutual criticism existing among particular schools proves not only the insufficiency of the results but also some doubts relative to the adopted extra-system assumptions. It seems that we get to the heart of the problem since psychology is based on specified anthropological and methodological assumptions. After all, the grounds for differences between particular schools of psychology should be perceived in these assumptions alone which anyway are not always clearly articulated. They sometimes remain hidden or unrealised.

The proposal of Christian psychology is an offer of an outlook on man's psychical world from the Christian perspective, based on the Christian anthropology assumptions. The dialogue of Christian psychology with other trends in psychology has to include the conception of man and the conception of science. Therefore in practising this type of psychology, no type of psychology is involved (this objection is sometimes raised, in a securing manner, by psychologists admitting their Christian philosophy) but what matters is a reliable and thorough scientific outlook on man.

Besides I believe that the assumptions and paradigms adopted in psychoanalysis or other types of psychology, relative to id, ego, superego, archetypes, cognitive networks do not necessarily have to be more heuristically fruitful than the conception of sin, grace and salvation adopted in the Christian faith. It should be mentioned that for centuries it was the Christian vision of man which has turned out to be correct both in theory and in practice. Finally it is worth bearing in mind the offer of John Paul II included in "Fides et Ratio" pertaining both to the anthropological conception, man's image and humanity and to the manner of practising science.

#### I. Topography of encounters

The encounter of Christian psychology with other types of this scientific discipline rich today may take place both at university and in a therapeutical office. University centres, and in particular catholic ones, as well as theological seminaries should make efforts to reinterpret the achievements of psychology including the Christian conception of man and his life since it is not

allowed to put aside, in the interpretation of human existence and its problems, man's goal and fate.

It seems to be right to make an effort in order to redefine health and disorders, norm and pathology in the light of Christian anthropology and the output of empirical psychology. Like psychophysical research which contributed to the cognisance of the nature of psychosomatic disorders, today the cognisance of disorders in the spiritual sphere (sin) may contribute to the development in noopsychosomatic science. Some steps have already been made in the area of Frankl's logotherapy and following in the footsteps of Rev. Prof. K. Popielski, continuator of his thought in Poland (1993).

The understanding of a norm and a pathology is worth to be redefined. The model of a statistic norm dominating today does not sufficiently allow for man's nature since it is very susceptible to cultural influences. The effect of the foregoing may be admitting free relations to be the norm whereas marriage may be treated as a pathology. Some more detailed aspects of a norm and a pathology will be discussed below.

There is also a number of human experiences which are treated by psychologists as a taboo subject. Until recently problems connected with the sense of guilt or the issues of forgiveness have been among such subjects. The sin and the grace, the damnation and the salvation still remain taboos.

The existence of God is an issue of an exceptional importance. It is particularly drastic in the context of the interpretation of religion as interpersonal communication. If there is no God, then any mystical experience, revelation, ecstasy has to be interpreted as a hallucination. The same for a prayer and other acts of worship which may be treated at the outmost as auto-psychotherapeutic techniques and not as an experience of man's interpersonal encounter with God. The Saints are perceived as the sick while praying and meditating people as the ones who are alienated from the real world.

The place for the verification of the theory is a therapeutical office. A question may be asked how many crises, conflicts, neuroses, depressions are caused by the fact that man does not understand his roots and the goal of his life. Even if psychology opposes to taking the place of religion (Cf. Witz 1994), it should at least admit humbly that it is not sufficiently competent to give the right answer to man looking for the meaning of life, the suffering and the death.

An unbelieving psychotherapist ignores eternal life and focuses his activity at man's worldly possessions. Sometimes this attitude is a way to retire into egoism and terrorism. Short-term assistance allowing to relieve unpleasant troubles does not necessarily mean the healing and the help with achieving long-term plenitude of life. (Cf. Jaworski 2000).

A question then arises whether a believing therapist may help the non believers? Can a Christian help the non Christians? This issue will be dealt with hereafter.

The circles in which the conception of Christian psychology is being elaborated are associations of Christian psychologists. The Polish Association of Christian Psychologists (the SPCh) founded in 1995 runs a Christian Psychology and Psychotherapy Department and within its scope of activity it elaborates basic psychological and psychotherapeutical conceptions based on Christian anthropology.

The SPCh co-operates with the German Association: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Christliche Psychologie, Psychotherapie und Biblische Seelsorge IGNIS (Cf. Jaworski 1994).

In the US as well, many precious instructions relative to the manner of practising psychology and psychotherapy based on Christian assumptions can be found in the work of Christian psychologists. The International Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) was created in 1956 on the initiative of a small group of Christian therapists. At present it has approx. 2000 members in the US and it also has branches in Canada and in 25 other countries of the world. It assembles psychotherapists and psychologists whose aim is the search of creative ideas tending towards the integration of the Christian thought and modern psychology. They edit a quarterly 'The Journal of Psychology and Christianity' (JPS). This periodical is mentioned in the index of "Psychological Abstracts", in "PsychINFO" and in other catalogues. (An annual subscription fee amounts to US \$ 40.-)

The ideas of Christian psychology are also propagated by the Association of Christian Counsellors.

## II. Dilemmas of a Christian facing modern psychology

The Christians studying psychology are doomed to the confrontation or the conflict between arguments spread by psychology and many truths of Christian theological doctrine (Cf.: Szyszkowski 1998). John Shepherd (2002) who touches upon the problem of integrating psychology and the Christian faith draws the attention to the fact that psychology is today the main field for ideological battle which is carried out in two fronts:

1. orientating psychology towards the opposition to the religion in general and the Christian faith in particular;
2. the conflict relative to the issue whether so-called godless psychology should be included within a Christian community or not ?

The Key issue is to what extent psychology is based on the philosophy of life which opposes the essence of the Christian faith. In modern psychology it is easy to notice the domination of the tendencies of materialism, rationalism, determinism and relativism and also the assumption that people in their behavior are neither aware nor free or morally responsible. The Christians cannot accept those assumptions which are in philosophical contradiction with the truths of their religion.

Within Christian faith we find different opinions as to the value of psychology in general and psychotherapy

in particular. One extreme camp is constituted by those who believe that only the Bible can be used in determining the truth and psychology does not inspire confidence. Another radical position is adopted by those who are willing to accept the opinions put forward by modern psychology even if they clearly contradict the biblical interpretation. Any other point of view is contained between those extremes (Johnson & Jones 2000).

Many Christians are opposed to psychology partly because they consider it to be ineffective. But instead of rejecting psychology, one should look at the problem of borders within which psychotherapy is complete, valuable and effective.

In the critical estimate of schools of psychology a doubtful importance of psychology as a science is emphasised. Some critics dispute the scientific character of psychology. Many psychical facts cannot be described in a manner typical for empirical sciences. In their studies researchers often have to rely on subjective data. On the other hand it would be a misunderstanding to claim that psychology is unscientific since it has collected a lot of useful information on how people live, think, fight, exert influence on each other, and behave. One cannot say however that it is easy to obtain precise information coming from the observation or to interpret it correctly (Johnson & Jones 2000 p. 110).

There exists a dependence between an ontological model and an empirical theory which is highlighted by M. Utsch (1998). A dependency existing between assumptions relative to the philosophy of life and scientific consequences can be found in psychology. Zimbardo draws the attention to the assumptions always underlying any philosophical theory. This "hidden image of man in psychology" is important although as a rule it is not articulated in particular theories. Similarly Herzog was seeking and pointed to the "hidden images of man" underlying scientific psychological theories. It is important to distinguish the knowledge included implicitly in the ontological model from the explicit knowledge derived from a specific theory. The ontological and anthropological model is open to meditative research studies and it is worth showing and documenting its impact on psychological and empirical theories.

Form of cognisance explicit cognisance implicate cognisance Basis empirical theory ontological model Method measurable, verifiable, repetitive introspection, receptiveness Result Theory image of man, values, meaning Classification "science" "philosophy of life" Psychology is based (intentionally or unintentionally) on a determined philosophy of life (ylicz 2002). One of the difficulties in the evaluation of a particular psychotherapeutical system is the fact that, according to McMinn (1996 p. 16), "an assumed theory underlies any technique and any philosophy of life underlies any theory". In fact a factor differentiating particular schools of psychology makes each of them based on different (often inconsistent with one another) philosophical

assumptions and assumptions relative to philosophy of life. A temptation then arises to say that inconsistencies invalidate entirely the value of those schools, except for at least one, i.e. the one recognised by me – however it is not a good approach.

While discussing psychology from the Christian point of view, we do not want to take an extreme position declaring that any natural cognisance coming from any sources other than the Bible is hostile to the faith. One should rather notice that the obtained scientific data and the Christian philosophy of life complement each other which we may also learn from the reading of John Paul II's encyclicals: "Veritatis splendor" and "Fides et Ratio".

How to reconcile those different philosophies of life? The problem is not as difficult as it seems to be. It is obvious that philosophical assumptions adopted by different orientations in psychology are somehow compatible with one another although they seem to be contradictory. There has to be an explanation why so many different therapies seem to be helpful at least in some special cases (Jones & Butman 1991 p. 392)

The problem lies in the fact that the truths which cannot be proved to be true using the empirical method, are considered to be true in the dogmatic manner. One of the assumptions of modern science is naturalism or materialism for which any extra-material phenomena do not exist. This assumption cannot be proved but merely adopted. However, when we look at human beings, mental processes, consciousness, emotions or morality from the psychological point of view it is hard to accept the position claiming that those phenomena can be explained from the purely naturalistic perspective.

III. Christian psychology – situational context, assumptions and behaviours

In order to resolve conflicts fringing upon psychology and Christianity, the Christians who are thinking and who are honest have to define their standpoint. Three options are to be considered:

1. they may give up their faith and accept philosophical assumptions of science in general and psychology in particular;
2. they may ignore inconsistencies;
3. they may reject the output of psychology.

Still these solutions are not satisfactory for the majority of the Christians. Therefore, instead of the confrontation, they choose the integration strategy. This way they can accept those psychological aspects which are harmonious with the biblical truth and reject those which are not consistent with them.

However this process has to be carried out in a systematical manner in order to obtain comprehensive and complete results. The basis for the synthesis of psychology with the Christian faith is the tension between the needs of the truth and the philosophical assumptions. Psychology and the Christian faith contain important truths which can be verified using scientific methods and which are based on philosophical assumptions.

The danger which a Christian psychologist has to take into consideration while creating Christian psychology is the reduction of differences between the natural and supernatural order. The instructions included in "Fides et Ratio" (John Paul II 1998) make it possible to reach the truth on man and his nature without any reductionism and without confusing thinking orders (Porczyk 2000 p. 3 – 5).

Since all philosophical assumptions of psychology are taken a priori in the foreground of scientific cognisance, the decision of taking one option or the other seems arbitrary. The Christians believe however that their philosophical assumptions are based on the revealed TRUTH and therefore it seems justified to prefer them to the assumptions of secular psychology. And this is the source of the conflict between psychology and the Christian faith.

In the process of the integration of psychology and Christian faith one should particularly bear in mind that:

1. it would be unreasonable on the Christians' part to reject the totality of the psychological output based, in its significant part, on scientific experiments and empirical studies;
2. it would be absurd to reject, to the advantage of secular psychology, the output of the Christian faith included in philosophical assumptions which cannot be proved because in fact they remain beyond the scope of scientific studies ;
3. the result of the synthesis achieved in Christian psychology has to be both a coherent system of knowledge and its practical use in the therapy.

Some Christian psychologists attempt for some time to ignore the necessity of the development of Christian psychology adopting, in an eclectic manner only, those therapeutical strategies which suit their clients or patients. If they focus on results only, without paying attention to the underlying scientific process, they are able to get the best from the two worlds. They may put aside, for some time, any contradictions existing between their Christian beliefs and the theses of secular psychology and enjoy the advantages of verified therapies.

However the real effectiveness of the therapy depends to a large extent on the understanding of who a man is and what are specific human mental processes. In this context the process of the integration of psychology and the Christian faith consists in two stages:

- 1) the analysis of the psychology output in order to evaluate which of its theses are anti-biblical and which ones are non-scientific and are arbitrarily based on anti-biblical assumptions,
- 2) the synthesis of "Christian psychology" using the biblical theology as a guide in the evaluation of the importance of psychological conclusions.

The process of integrating psychology and the Christian faith is therefore accomplished in the following manner: starting from the Christian point of view we try to assess different components of psychological

assumptions in order to identify all the items which are and which are not consistent with our faith, to adapt whatever is consistent and to adjust whatever is not originally consistent but may be agreed with the faith (Johnson & Jones 2000 p. 172). In this process the output of psychological cognisance and the substance which is compatible with the

Christian faith and fully supported by the results of scientific testing are taken into consideration. The process of integrating psychology and the Christian faith is now the subject of numerous discussions carried out by Christian psychologists. It is freed by the multitude of standpoints relative to the subject matter in question. The Authors examining the problems connected with this issue suggest three main approaches to the integration of psychology and the Christian faith:

- 1) ethical integration, application of religious morality to the science practice ;
- 2) prospective integration to the effect that scientific and religious views are independent but the complement one another in the perception of reality;
- 3) humanisation or Christianisation in the process of science integration; they clearly require to include religious beliefs as a control factor shaping the perception of facts, theories and methods in social sciences (Jones & Butman 1991 p. 20).

Jones and Butman prefer the third approach but they have also formulated their own ideas pertaining to the process of integrating psychology and Christian faith. They propose three methods:

- 1) "pragmatic eclecticism in which methods "are used"; compared with others, they give the best results at work on problems revealed by the clients;
- 2) metatheoretical or transtheoretical eclecticism in which it is suggested that the therapists offering the psychotherapy may simply be wrong as to the determination of the acting factor and the agent giving the best chance for the development of the effective professional activities and distinguishing empirically or phenomenologically effective persons providing help from less effective ones notwithstanding the "theories" that distinguish their thinking from the others;
- 3) "theoretical integration" which attempts to overcome the constraints imposed by individual preferred theories using them as assumptions or a basis when it goes beyond the theory drawing from one model or the other (Jones & Butman 1991 p. 393).

Although those authors prefer the third approach, they emphasise some threats in its application. While assessing different schools of psychology from the Christian point of view, their strengths and weaknesses are identified. Each of the psychological models has some components which are consistent with faith and for this reason they seem attractive for a Christian psychologist. Each model also has components incompatible with the biblical faith and this involves struggling with their inconsistencies, weaknesses and problems. None of the

theories may be rejected without verification but none of the theories may be uncritically adopted by a Christian counselors, either.

Jones and Butman (1991) mention the essential assumptions of psychology based on Christian philosophy:

- 4) man is a being who has a goal and a value because he has been created in this way by Almighty God who "planned" him in this manner;
- 5) man is a being who has an immaterial, spiritual soul;
- 6) man is a being who has the ability, given by God, to behave rationally and morally;
- 7) man is a being who has a determined degree of freedom and corresponding responsibility;
- 8) man is an intelligent and social being;
- 9) man is a being who has a sinful nature which results in the following:
  - a) he breaks the order of God;
  - b) he avoids responsibility and
  - c) he chooses a morally wrong action;
- 10) there exists a spiritual goal loftier than psychological health and development;

The process of the integration and development of Christian psychology is undoubtedly an enormous task. It is manifested in the following areas of activity:

- a) identifying philosophical assumptions in psychology which contradict the Christian faith;
- b) identifying characteristic Christian philosophical assumptions;
- c) identifying scientific philosophical assumptions which are neutral regarding the Christian faith and may be adopted by the Christians;
- 11) building a theoretical basic psychological model based on Christian assumptions;
- 12) including all of the collected scientific data into the model;
- 13) identifying therapeutically techniques depending on the assumptions made;
- 14) explaining their effectiveness based on theoretical knowledge;
- 15) discovering additional forms of therapy typical for a Christian therapist;
- 16) teaching Christian therapists and counselors and elaborating theoretical principles underlying Christian therapy.

IV. Psychotherapeutical ministration of a Christian psychologist

A Christian psychologist provides help to people who suffer, who are hurt and who seek chances for a more profound and more integral development through psychotherapy and counseling services.

The principles of Christian psychotherapy put forward by the SPCh are set forth in 10 points:

- 1) it is based on scientific principles in the field of psychology and theology of spiritual life;
- 2) it allows for the existence and action of God in accordance with the Gospel preaching;

3) it allows for natural dimensions of man's life i.e. biological, mental, social and spiritual dimension;

4) allowing for and respecting scientific achievements of different schools of psychology it also assumes man's psycho-physico-spiritual integrity and his creation by God himself to make the most of his life;

5) it promotes an integrated development i.e. harmonious combination of mental, physical and spiritual development (understood as man's personal relation with God);

6) it uses all psychotherapeutically techniques which are consistent with the Gospel;

7) it recognizes the way to free man towards love in the study of the truth on man and on God;

8) apart from natural working methods based on psychological and social sciences it is ready to co-operate with the grace coming from God for whom any mentally suffering person is a beloved child;

9) in justified cases it benefits from the co-operation with other professionals, including the clergy (priests, spiritual leaders, exorcists);

10) it assumes the importance of personal relationship of the therapist with God (humility and opening to Holy Spirit's bounties) for the effectiveness of the therapy.

W. May (1992), the President of the German Association of Christian Psychologists (IGNIS) believes that it is important for Christian psychotherapy how Jesus transforms people. He does so in love and through love. The following aspects are to be taken in consideration:

1) Love – deep and true transformation is a result of love; changes caused by fear or constraints do not bring the healing. People who are profuse in fear or punishment cannot be counselors or therapists. Jesus not only leads us towards our Father's love but also makes us able to love (Rz 5.5; J 13.35)

2) Transfiguration – a Latin word [transfiguratio] means the transformation, transfiguration, change. It is a process of reworking a person's individual history not through forgetting, suppressing or accusing but through forgiveness. Forgiveness means pardon. Transformation also means the change of attitude towards suffering.

3) Metanoia – is a name for transformation. It determines the transformation of the status quo and shapes the future under Holy Spirit's guidance (Rz 6.5). The problem lies in the fact that we do not allow Jesus to intervene in our life because we are scared and we do not want to give up our predominant place. This does not mean at all any justification or encouragement for passiveness or incompetence.

4) Freeing – you will know the truth and the Truth will free you (J 8.32).

In Christian counseling an assumption relative to Christian anthropology is adopted consciously. During a meeting with SPCh members in Warsaw Professor Wosinski said that man cannot be helped by putting aside his relationship with God, values, moral principles. The assumption on "the absence of assumptions" is absurd.

One of the first questions which man should be asked is the following: "What is your attitude towards God?". This strategy is applied by the American Association of Christian Psychologists. The point is to help rebuild and correct the feeling of identity. Man should provide himself answers to the questions:

- What does he believe and what does he not believe in?
- What is important and what is unimportant in life?
- What are the goals of life?

At the very first meeting at the Counselling Office a person looking for help fills out a six-page questionnaire: "Who are you?"

Pastoral counseling is a particular form of help offered to man suffering from hardship, to man who is hurt. The most important counseling features based on Christian psychology are presented below:

1) The objective of the counseling is to help regain identity (including religious identity),

2) The objective of the counseling is not to equip man with better control over his own life; it is more important to entrust God with any control (this is the essential point in the therapy based on the religious faith),

3) It is not us, the counselors, who work and cause transformations. A crucifix is hanging above any diplomas. It is Him who leads us. If a psychologist starts believing that it is himself who changes the patient, that is the end – he is terminated. Jesus' words "Take your cross and follow me" should be taken seriously. This is the road of suffering and passion on which man undergoes transformations. Sometimes a therapist has to tell the patient "You have not suffered enough". The reading of the book by G. May "Addiction and grace" which deals with bringing the patient to the decision: "Finish!" may serve as an inspiration.

4) The objective of pastoral counseling is to:

- a) help regaining the insight into man's own spiritual experiences;
- b) help people become aware of the profundity of the evangelic values;
- c) make people aware of their sinfulness: "whatever you do, it is a sin and this always means a destructive disorder in the equilibrium"
- d) shape an individual's conscience through help while making morally sound choices.

5) In the counseling based on a religious community a psychologist should devote 1/3 of his time to the client and 2/3 to the community. Support groups should be created within communities. Days of retreat for focus groups are good for the beginning and the consolidation.

6) Pastoral counseling should take into consideration the following dimensions and contexts:

- a) the personality context: making people aware of their strengths and weaknesses. If we become aware of our constraints then our capabilities become unlimited provided we open to the operation of God's grace.
- b) the interpersonal context: pastoral counseling may be defined as the co-operation of two persons cogitating

upon personal events, problems, attitudes. As a result of this dialogue the individual seeking help should be provided with:

- a deeper insight into his relationship with God;
- everyday awareness of values, his own hierarchy of values;
- the growing ability to make morally sound choices; the client himself should make such choices;
- c) the theological dimension which covers the following competencies:
  - the understanding of God’s intervention in our life;
  - the understanding of individual spiritual growth (an essay “My opinion on spiritual development” is suggested here);
  - shaping the opinion on the scope of man’s free will and its constraints by pathology;
  - the understanding of the essence of sin;
  - the understanding of the essence of God’s grace;
  - a mature attitude towards the tradition and the Church preaching (e.g. relative to the role of sex in man’s life);
- d) the pastoral context: the degree of competence with which a counselor is able to reconcile the concern for man stemming from love with the simultaneous call for spiritual growth.

Pastoral counselling is to provide assistance to an individual in a particular situation. It should also stimulate spiritual growth so as future action could better reflect values preferred in the Gospel.

For non Christians the offer of Christian psychology, psychotherapy and counselling may also be attractive in a way. Christian counselling in the service for non Christians consists in seeing a patient, in the light of psychological knowledge and revealed truths, in captivity with his soul closed and tied. A therapist is to help him free himself from the captivity and open for him the door towards the profundity of life through: the explanation of the biblical principles of life, through preaching the Gospel, sharing (passing on) experiences of Merciful God’s interventions.

The question on how to do this with the non Christians, is dealt with by Ch. Ledger (1992) who replies that a Christian therapist helps the non Christians do good:

- a. by being what he is i.e. a man of love (to give people whatever comes from God, from Jesus: warmth, smile, comment, acceptance, treating people seriously)
- b. by saying whatever he says, imparting the principles of adequate life consistent with the biblical commandments
- c. by doing whatever he does, acting within the power of different Holy Spirit’s bounties.

V. Directions in the development and topics for studies in the area of Christian psychology

Psychology is situated in various scientific contexts. It is most frequently said to be a natural, empirical science but there are also advocates of treating it as a social science or even as a part of humanities. Depending on

the methodological context in which psychology will be practised, applied research methods and techniques will vary. In academic circles the behavioural trend and empiricism are dominating. According to them psychology is treated as an empirical, natural science.

The main component of man’s cognizance is the measurement of different processes: biological, physiological and mental ones. Simple, elementary processes can be measured and described.

However it is difficult to transfer some of more complex psychical experiences to the psychometric level. Even the most complicated feelings such as jealousy or fascination cannot be transposed into figures. It is even more difficult to describe man’s spiritual experiences.

Bearing in mind the level of the analysis for the discussed phenomena (microscopic, molecular or macroscopic) at the operational level of research hypotheses significant differences in the interpretation of human behaviours may occur (Materska 2001 p. 127).

Christian psychology sees its role in the reinterpretation of different aspects of man’s mental life described by academic psychology. Its objective is to rectify a frequently distorted image of life and man, of God and the world, of the norm, the health and the illness, of a therapist and the science.

Christian conception and interpretation of human life takes into consideration its origin, properties, goal, the fact of suffering and sinfulness. Therefore some specific human experiences such as: sin, grace, suffering and mercy, the goal and meaning of life (Porczyk 2000 p. 1 – 6) are of interests for Christian psychology. A number of questions still awaits answers: What is the meaning and function of suffering? How to interpret, from a psychological point of view, the experience of love, faith or hope? What are the criteria for mental and spiritual health? The answers to the aforementioned questions provided by academic psychology are insufficient for me. The studies should cover the subject matter i.e. man with his 1) psychical, 2) psychosomatic and 3) psychospiritual problems.

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