

Psychology and  
Psychotherapy  
in the Perspective  
of Christian  
Anthropology



# Psychology and Psychotherapy in the Perspective of Christian Anthropology

Edited by

Nicolene L. Joubert

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



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This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-1657-1

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1657-1

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## FOREWORD

### TOWARD A UNIFIED CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

ERIC L. JOHNSON

Every well-developed intellectual community is unified by a shared set of core beliefs about reality, called a worldview; and every such worldview community has a more or less well-developed set of beliefs about human beings, called an anthropology or psychology, and practices for how to promote their healing, called a psychotherapy.

Such matters are extremely important for the Christian community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because it is in the midst of an intellectual crisis (MacIntyre 1977). For the past few centuries, the worldview of naturalism (or secularism) has steadily grown in influence, until it has become the dominant worldview in the West. A part of this ascendancy was the emergence of a new psychology – commonly called *modern* – based upon the worldview of naturalism and the methods of the natural sciences, and it has become the only legitimate version of psychology in the West. Christians can appreciate that modern psychology has discovered many important aspects of human nature. But Christians have been slow to grasp the implications of having become a minority worldview community. In order to get advanced degrees in psychology, Christians have to study in departments that have accepted the assumptions of naturalism, where they unwittingly get socialised into those assumptions, not realising that Christianity has its own psychology, with its own rules of discourse, which has been developing for over three millennia (going back to the earliest portions of the Bible).

Complicating our predicament considerably is the fact that naturalism is a minimalist worldview; it has relatively few, distinctive assumptions that other worldview communities do not also agree with, such as belief in a natural order and its lawful functioning. As a result, much of its theory, research and practice can be appropriated by members of other worldview

communities without seeming to contradict the receiving community's worldview. This is actually not true, since even simple perceptions are shaped by one's perspective (remember the ambiguous figure of the young woman–old woman optical illusion?), or as a philosopher of science might put it, scientific observations are necessarily theory-laden and shaped by one's paradigm. So even the simple conclusions of naturalists based on empirical data are distorted by their perspective, since Christians believe God is closely involved in all of human life and God is left out of all modern psychology.

Even more problematic is what is left out of modern psychology's theory, research and practice from a Christian perspective: human origin via creation by God (leaving aside the means God used); the *imago Dei* teaching that one's relationship with God is central to human life; sin and its devastating consequences to human functioning, including alienation from God and neighbour; the healing restoration – called redemption – that comes to human beings through union with Christ and advanced by faith in him; the indwelling Holy Spirit; and an eternal future that begins with judgment. All of these themes of Christian thought have enormous psychological and therapeutic implications.

Christian psychology and psychotherapy (CPP), then, is that version of psychology and psychotherapy based on a Christian worldview. The perfect psychology, along with all the sciences, is found in God's understanding and judgment, so the ultimate goal of a Christian psychology is to correspond to God's understanding and evaluation of the nature of human beings in all their complexity. We would not expect non-Christians to endorse this approach, but since the beginning, humans have been called to image God, and this conformity includes intellectual matters as well as ethical and spiritual ones.

Perhaps the greatest distinctive feature of CPP is its starting point. CPP prioritises biblical revelation and the classic works of the Christian tradition in order to build its distinctive framework and identity *before* (speaking ideally) it investigates the created order or the psychologies of other worldview communities to learn what it can from them. And one of CPP's greatest challenges is to competently translate the discourse of modern psychology into its own unique idiom, for this requires expertise in both modern psychology and the Christian faith (Johnson 2007, Ch. 7).

The present collection of essays well demonstrates the strengths and potential of this orientation. First, the reader will notice the diversity of

Christian perspectives represented: Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. Each chapter, in its own way, examines a particular anthropological, psychological or psychotherapeutic theme from one of those traditions, and in the process demonstrates the psychological richness of these great Christian traditions. Moreover, Christianity has always found a home within the ethnicity and culture of its members, and this too is evident in the present book through the diverse perspectives that result from the different European cultures of the authors. As CPP spreads throughout the world, more cultures will participate. Most importantly, a wide range of important psychological and theological topics are explored, including personhood and personality, relationality, the Trinity, the emotions, love, dialogue, holistic treatment, prevention, risk-taking behaviours, the role of the face and language in relationship, the healing potential present in nature, and guilt and sin feelings; as well as significant engagement with specific subdisciplines like psychology of religion, health psychology, community psychology, and psychotherapy. According to MacIntyre (1990), a living intellectual tradition is one that is engaged with other viable intellectual traditions. That is abundantly evident in the present collection and should encourage supportive readers.

Nevertheless, enormous tasks remain for CPP. We are far from having a comprehensive, unified model of psychology, including a common vocabulary, a conceptual apparatus (or grammar), a significant body of research findings shaped by Christian assumptions, and a corresponding set of empirical and therapeutic practices, probably the most important of which is a body of distinctly Christian psychological research. (It is encouraging to see a few studies in the book presenting data.) These deficits are reflected in the fact that CPP is not a recognised perspective that gains the attention and engagement of others in the field (and this in turn inhibits Christians in the field from participating). MacIntyre would probably conclude that, though CPP is a living tradition, until it produces its own distinctive body of psychological literature (theory building, research, and practices), it will be struggling for its life. All this calls for our prayer that God would pour out great resources for the task, including the raising up of more contributors in the coming generations. We see in the Bible and in the history of the church that God loves to take such challenging, even desperate, conditions and do something marvellous with them that powerfully manifests his glory. This book is a token and firstfruits of such renewal.

## Sources

- Johnson, Eric L. 2007. *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. 1977. "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narratives, and the Philosophy of Science." *Monist* 60, 453–72.
- . 1990. *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame.

## PREFACE

This book reflects the perspectives, thoughts and ideas of a group of Christian professionals practising in the fields of health and mental health in Europe and beyond. The European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy (EMCAPP) emerged from the shared interest of a group of psychologists, psychotherapists and theologians in the role and impact of spiritual beliefs on psychotherapeutic and counselling processes and healing, such as the belief that there is a living God who created human beings in his image and who is actively maintaining this world. This led to the formulation of seven statements on the purpose of EMCAPP and a declaration on five main positions within psychotherapy, which are listed in the article about EMCAPP following the introduction. Members have held regular symposia since 1996, the themes of which are also listed in the abovementioned article, such as *basic anthropological concepts in psychotherapy*, *grace and the process of psychotherapy*, and the concepts of *truth* and *agape love*. The decision to publish perspectives relating to the different Christian theological positions and to the integration of Christian spirituality and psychology and psychotherapy stemmed from the desire to share valuable knowledge on these topics gained through years of experience, research and academic exchange with other mental health professionals.

The theological positions expressed by the authors represent different Christian faith traditions. A variety of psychological theories and models are also included in the articles. The book is intended not only to share ideas, thoughts and perspectives with others but also to highlight the importance of spirituality in people's healing process.

Nicolene L. Joubert  
Institute of Christian Psychology  
June 2018

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Publishing a book of this extent, variety and depth is quite a daunting task. The authors represent eight different countries of Europe, namely Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom, Russia, Italy, the Ukraine, Spain and Finland, and one country outside of Europe, namely South Africa. The cultural and language differences are huge, and although the authors are all well-established professionals with good publication records in their mother tongue, only the authors from the United Kingdom and South Africa have previously published works written originally in English. The first challenge faced by the non-English-speaking authors, therefore, was to get their articles translated into English. We acknowledge and applaud all of them for their dedicated effort to share their thoughts, perspectives and experience with an English-speaking audience of mental health professionals, theologians and others. We also thank the translators who worked behind the scenes with the authors to make this publication possible.

No project of this extent is possible without a competent and dedicated project leader. We thank Anna Ostaszewska for not only managing this project in a professional manner but also formatting the numerous articles. Our sincere appreciation and gratitude also go to Nicolene Joubert for dedicating her time and skills to this project as the main editor, and to Dorothy du Plessis for her language editing and proofreading.

Experts in the integration of theology, psychology and psychotherapy outside of Europe have inspired, enriched and encouraged the work of EMCAPP over the years. One of these experts, Eric Johnson, who has published several books on this topic,<sup>1</sup> is an old friend and supporter of EMCAPP. We thank him sincerely for his continuous support and his perceptive and insightful foreword.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Eric L. Johnson and Stanton L. Jones, *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

We express our sincere gratitude to Keith Richmond for his thorough, professional language editing during the final phase of the project to ensure a consistent level of English language throughout the book.

Lastly, we thank Cambridge Scholars Publishing for taking on the project and for their editorial support.

# INTRODUCTION

NICOLENE L. JOUBERT<sup>1</sup>

The impact of spirituality on the health and mental health of people has increasingly been highlighted in the fields of psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasises that health is not the mere absence of an illness or disease but is a state of complete physical, psychological and social well-being. WHO promotes a holistic view of people, acknowledges the spiritual dimension of health, and emphasises the importance of making provision for spirituality in health services.

The articles in this book reflect the authors' perspectives on how the spiritual dimension of health and mental health can be integrated into psychotherapeutic processes. The authors approach the integration process from a Christian faith position. However, their contributions could be useful to adherents of other faith traditions as well.

Christian professionals from a number of European countries and beyond have contributed their perspectives, research findings and therapy models on the integration of Christian spirituality and mental health. The Christian spiritual approaches represent various Christian faith traditions, such as the Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Evangelical, Lutheran and Anglican traditions. The book has four main sections covering anthropology (the nature of human beings), spirituality/theology (the spiritual dimension of functioning), psychology (psychological theories and models from a Christian faith perspective) and psychotherapy (psychotherapeutic approaches from a Christian spiritual perspective).

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Dr Nicolene Joubert has been a counselling psychologist in private practice for 35 years, specialising in the integration of Christian spirituality and psychotherapy and trauma therapy. She is the founder of the Institute of Christian Psychology in South Africa, a training institution that offers courses in Christian psychology and counselling.

Section I, dealing with anthropology, presents perspectives on how people's thinking and functioning is influenced by their view of human nature. This has an impact not only on how people deal with life's challenges and personal issues but also on how they develop and mature psychologically and spiritually. The four contributions in this section all emphasise anthropology in respect of psychotherapeutic processes and the recovery of the whole person.

The first article is by Romuald Jaworski, a Polish psychotherapist, who discusses the concept of the person as an anthropological basis for Christian psychology and psychotherapy. The author asserts that the human person is both a cognitive subject and a subject of cognition and indicates how this double aspect of human life should be considered in psychotherapy. He further asserts that anthropological premises drawn from philosophy, theology and psychology form a scientific basis for a Christian psychology and psychotherapy, which could also make use of the achievement of modern psychology.

A diagnostic model to assess the whole person, including spirituality, is presented in the second article. The author is Mike Sheldon, a medical doctor from the United Kingdom, who developed the model to enable doctors, counsellors and others to assess the health of a person by combining the physical, social and spiritual aspects of functioning. This whole-person assessment model involves a multi-disciplinary team that explores the life story of the person to identify areas of concern, and the results provide deepened insight into the functional limitations caused by their illness.

In the third article, Olena Yaremko, a Ukrainian psychotherapist, offers a very interesting study on how personality factors influence correlations between interpersonal relationships and a relationship with God. With reference to her research among university students in Ukraine and to selected personality factors, the author explores types of religiosity, types of relationships with God, and types of interactions with other people. She analyses her findings from the perspective of Christian psychology and psychotherapy and draws practical implications for pastoral care and counselling.

The fourth article, written by Francesco Cutino, an Italian clinical psychologist, offers a philosophical, historical and scientific perspective on ecotherapy and a brief discussion of the importance of social farms as strategic resources for ecotherapy. The discussion includes thought-

provoking reflection on how Christian faith impacts the ecotherapy framework. The author indicates how the word “creation” refers to more than just nature, having a broader and deeper meaning. In the Judeo-Christian tradition it refers to God’s loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance.

Section II focuses on spiritual and theological beliefs in relation to the psyche of a person.

The authors of the first article in this section, Mar Alvarez and Monserrat Lafuente, are Spanish psychiatrists. They assert that in psychiatric and psychological texts a shift has taken place from a purely natural-scientific orientation to greater openness to the mysterious depths of a person. This article discusses the gap between spirit and psyche and explains the psychospiritual faculties of a person, which may have a critical role in psychotherapy, transforming the psyche through openness to the transcendent. The authors present a Christian anthropological model that could bridge the gap between the spirit and the psyche.

The second article in this section is by Andrey Lorgus, a Russian Orthodox priest, psychologist and psychotherapist. He analyses the meaning of *spirituality* and *spiritual* for psychotherapy from a Russian Orthodox perspective and indicates how spirituality is a characteristic of existential processes and the search for meaning. The author explores the anxiety elicited in clients by the search for meaning and asserts that the answers to existential questions may be resolved in the sphere of religious and mystical experiences but not in the field of psychotherapy. Thus, the integration of religious and mystical experiences in a psychotherapy process is essential for the recovery of the whole person. (This is supported by research findings presented in the first article of section III.)

The last article in section II is by Krzysztof Wojcieszek, a Polish professor of social sciences, who questions the lack of reference to religious beliefs and communities in the prevention of risk-taking behaviours. The author reviews the research done on risk-taking behaviour and how to prevent it. Furthermore, he proposes a philosophical analysis of the nature of risk-taking behaviour and demonstrates how religiosity could serve to prevent such behaviour.

Section III focuses on Christian psychological paradigms.

The first article, written by Nicolene Joubert, a professor of psychology, psychologist and trauma counsellor, focuses on how Christian psychology could be applied to individual psychotherapy and community psychological interventions. The author discusses Christian beliefs as a meaning-making framework in trauma counselling and briefly explains a number of relevant biblical beliefs that underscore the importance of anthropology, and the concepts of biblical epistemology, ontology and ecclesiology. The important role of these beliefs in the processing of traumatic events is discussed. This article supports the discourse presented in the second article of section II, by Lorgus, in holding that the question of *why a person is suffering* can be resolved through meaning found in the sphere of the religious and mystical (meaning being a critical factor in psychotherapeutic processes). In the second part of her article, the author demonstrates the value of integrating a Christian belief system with the assumptions and values of community psychology so as to constitute a Christian community psychology framework that can be applied in practice. The article thus affirms that religious beliefs and communities could provide a framework for preventative interventions and enhance mental health. This notion is also presented in the last article of section II, by Wojcieszek.

Zenon Uchnast, a Polish emeritus professor of psychology, is the author of the second article in this section. He provides an analysis of the concept of *synergy* based on the original meanings attributed to the concept by its creators, namely early Christian theologians such as Saint Basil (329–379), Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (330–389) and Saint Gregory of Nyssa (335–395). The author states that a deepened analysis of the concept of synergy provides a methodological basis for research in Christian psychology. It could also inspire further research into the psychosocial climate required to develop synergetic relations between nature and culture.

The third article is by Wolfram Soldan, a German medical doctor and psychotherapist. He illustrates the commonalities and differences between mainstream psychology and Christian psychology by using the example of forgiveness. This example is chosen because the topic has been researched by both mainstream and Christian psychology. The author indicates how Christian psychology can give answers to difficult questions that secular psychotherapy cannot address.

Section IV contains articles on a Christian approach to psychotherapy. These articles present various theological positions and psychotherapeutic models.

Anna Ostaszewska, a Polish psychotherapist, has written the first article in this section on an integrative psychotherapeutic praxis developed in Poland. The author presents a Christian philosophical approach to integrative psychotherapy, which identifies with the psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioural approaches widely used in psychotherapy. The integration is based on Christian anthropology and its philosophy of personalism. Christian spirituality is understood as the relationship between a human being and the person of God. The approach further emphasises the skills and internal integration of the psychotherapist. The article provides a framework for a Christian approach to psychotherapy and includes research findings supporting the approach.

The second article is by Elena Strigo, a Russian psychotherapist, who discusses the traditional Eastern patristic concept of “face” as applied in psychotherapy and the role of words in constituting the person. Face is viewed as the speaking image created by the word, through which the image of God may express itself in a person. The author explores how the reality of the person displays itself in an empirical personality (face), which is composed by a semantic frame. The author distinguishes between face and guise, which refers to the result of the influence of evil on the semantic frame (face). These concepts are illustrated in a discussion of a case study.

The third article in this section is by Trevor Griffiths, a medical doctor and counsellor. He presents an extended hypothesis about human personal identity and the triune image of the One Living Creator, and he frames his hypothesis in relation to chaos theory and adaptive systems. The interrelatedness of all living systems and the ability to adapt to changes (even if they are creating chaos) is highlighted. The author further demonstrates how emotional chaos could lead to growth, stemming from interaction with a triune God and one’s community.

Olga Krasnikova, a Russian counselling psychologist, is the author of the fourth article. She presents an approach to the concepts of sin and guilt, as understood in the Russian Orthodox Church. The author distinguishes between feelings of guilt and feelings of sin or the recognition of sin. She indicates how the practice of repentance and confession and hope for forgiveness can lead to positive psychological changes, such as the

experience of relief and joy as well as gratitude, generosity and mercy. This results in a positive change in attitudes towards others. The theme of this article resonates with that by Wojcieszek in section II, which highlights the importance of forgiveness in psychotherapeutic processes and healing.

The fifth article in section IV is by Saarah Kinnunen, a Finnish psychotherapist. She focuses on the healing of psychological issues that stem from a dysfunctional relationship with one's father. Her article highlights how hurt that stems from an insecure attachment with one's father can leave footprints in one's life, identified as feelings of fear, anxiety, distrust, isolation and the belief that one should be able to survive on one's own. The author demonstrates how connecting to God the Father can bring comfort and help clients suffering from a father wound to forgive and reconcile with their loss, leading to a new freedom to explore and enjoy life. This article resonates with the previous article, by Krasnikova, and the third article in section II, by Wojcieszek, as the healing properties of receiving and granting forgiveness are accentuated.

The last article in this section is by Werner May, a German psychologist, who draws attention to the issue of setting healthy boundaries in relationships. He deals with this issue in the form of five *Yes*'s and one *No* as answers to requests from other people. This dialogical approach to setting boundaries forms an important building block in trust-based relationships, and it helps people to overcome inner shame and mistrust.

In conclusion, the four sections have different emphases but all deal with the integration of Christian faith and a variety of psychological and psychotherapeutic approaches to address biological, psychological, social and spiritual issues and to enhance the health of the whole person.

We invite you, the reader, to consider the ideas, findings and examples put forward in this book. We encourage you to contemplate your own spiritual position and approach to recovery and healing, and to implement and test one or more of our integrative frameworks.

# THE EUROPEAN MOVEMENT FOR CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

ANNA OSTASZEWSKA

## **Introduction: An Overview of EMCAPP**

The European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy (EMCAPP, [www.emcapp.eu](http://www.emcapp.eu)), consists of psychologists, psychotherapists and theologians mainly from different countries of Europe (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine), where they hold key positions. Interest and support also comes from beyond the borders of Europe, as in the case of Nicolene Joubert, founder and head of the Institute for Christian Psychology in South Africa, and Eric Johnson, past president of the Society for Christian Psychology (SCP) in the US. The name of the movement was initially the European Movement for Christian Psychology and Anthropology (EMCPA), which in 2010 was changed to the current name. The movement is ecumenical and all Christian traditions are represented: Evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Lutheran. Representatives of different countries meet every year at the EMCAPP symposia. The EMCAPP e-journal, *Christian Psychology Around the World*, has been published since 2012. The new EMCAPP project of webinar lectures started in 2017.

The seven statements of EMCAPP are as follows:

1. EMCAPP is based on the belief that there is a God who is actively maintaining this world, and therefore, there cannot be any discussions about Man without talking about God.
2. EMCAPP acknowledges the limitations of all human knowledge and therefore appreciates the attempts of the various Christian denominations to describe God and their faith.

3. EMCAPP brings together international leaders and pioneers in the field of Christian psychology and psychotherapy and its underlying anthropology.
4. EMCAPP respects and appreciates the cultural and linguistic diversity of backgrounds of its members.
5. EMCAPP encourages its members to learn how to recognize each other as friends and brothers and sisters in Christ.
6. EMCAPP encourages its members in their national challenges and responsibilities.
7. EMCAPP has a global future and it is open to discourse and joined research opportunities round the world.

The current EMCAPP board members are: Werner May (Germany) – president; Anna Ostaszewska (Poland) – vice-president; Elena Strigo (Russia); Nicolene Joubert (South Africa); Andrey Lorgus (Russia); Francesco Cutino (Italy).

### The EMCAPP Declaration – 2006

There are **five main positions** within psychotherapy depending on the belief system and method of practice of the therapist.

1. The non-Christian therapist using a secular model of therapy. This person puts their trust in science and experience and thus gives honour to science and self-knowledge as developed through personal life experiences of self and others. Clients are blessed by common sense therapy and God’s universal grace.
2. The non-Christian therapist using a combination of secular models and also a post-modern “spiritual” approach working with metaphysical concepts not directly related to Christianity. Here outcomes are less predictable, and exploring the spiritual area without firm guidelines may lead to unforeseen consequences.
3. The therapist who is a Christian but uses a secular model of therapy as in the first case above. Again the client is helped by common sense and God’s grace. Christian areas can be explored if the client wishes it, but the therapist is usually not prepared or trained to integrate the spiritual dimension into the help they provide.
4. The Christian therapist who uses a Christian approach to psychotherapy and so develops specific aims, methods and desired outcomes according to Christian beliefs. The model of practice is developed and verified using the same scientific methods as in

secular models in recognition of the fact that God gives us both reason and revelation. This therapist gives honour to God and also recognises the value of scientific evaluation. He/she trusts God first and then human reason.

5. The Christian therapist who uses a “charismatic” or a “Biblical” approach to therapy which relies on God’s direct intervention through prayer, God’s word and ministry. No recognised model of therapy is developed (although the individual’s practice may be consistent), and no scientific evaluation is sought as the spiritual world is not considered suitable for scientific evaluation. All the honour is given to God, who works in a mystical and hidden way.

### **History of the EMCAPP Symposia**

**4-6 December 1996** – EMCPA Symposium I: “Basic anthropological concepts in psychology”. Kitzingen, Germany.

Participants from: Germany, Poland, United Kingdom.

**1-4 July 1999** – Symposium II: “Grace in the process of psychotherapy”. Plock, Poland.

Participants from: Canada, Germany, Poland, United Kingdom.

**28-30 October 2002** – Symposium III: “What is agape?” Kitzingen, Germany.

Participants from: Denmark, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

**22-24 September 2003** – Symposium IV: “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free”. Warsaw, Poland.

Participants from: Germany, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, United Kingdom. The symposium participants had a meeting with the Polish primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, who blessed the Movement.

**23-24 October 2004** –Symposium V: “Christian psychology and psychotherapy”. Roma, Italy.

Participants from: Germany, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom.

**28-30 November 2005** – Symposium VI: “A Christian approach to the health of persons”. London.

Participants from: Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

**27-29 May 2006** – EMCPA board meeting in Warsaw. Participants: Werner May (Germany), Mike Sheldon (UK), Anna Ostaszewska (Poland). At this meeting the EMCAPP Declaration was formulated and established.

**14-16 February 2007** – Symposium VII: “Aims of Christian psychology” and “Spiritual maturity”. Warsaw, Poland.

Participants from: Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

**21-23 May 2008** – Symposium VIII: “Professional qualifications of Christian psychotherapists or counsellors. Cooperation between God and a man (psychotherapist, counsellor)”. Cracow, Poland.

Participants from: Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Taiwan, United Kingdom, USA. Special guests: Dr Eric Johnson, president of the Society for Christian Psychology, USA; Hui Shan Hsu and Shirley Ou Yang from the Lutheran Seminary in Taiwan; and David Depledge, president of ACC Europe.

**26-28 June 2009** – Symposium IX: “Does God live in any human being?” Warsaw, Poland.

Participants from: Germany, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom. Special guest: Dr Nicolene Joubert, director of the Institute of Christian Psychology in Johannesburg, South Africa.

**January 2010** – EMCPA board meeting in Helsinki, Finland.

Participants: Werner May (Germany), president; Anna Ostaszewska (Poland), vice-president; Toni Tehro (Finland), member; Elena Strigo (Russia), member; Andrey Lorgus (Russia), member. The name of the movement was changed to the European Movement of Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy – EMCAPP.

**2-5 May 2011** – EMCAPP Symposium X: “Future of Christian anthropology, psychology and psychotherapy”. Moscow, Russia.

Participants from: Austria, Germany, Italy, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Switzerland.

**3-6 September 2012** – Symposium XI: “Specific subjects of Christian anthropology, psychology and psychotherapy”. Warsaw, Poland.

Participants from: Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA.

**9-12 September 2013** –Symposium XII: “Specific healing factors in Christian psychotherapy”. Lviv, Ukraine.

Participants from: Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Ukraine.

**2-6 October 2014** – Symposium XIII: “Christian psychological models/explanations of psychological disorders”. Rome, Italy.

Participants from: Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Russia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA.

**10-13 September 2015** – Symposium XIV: “Christian approaches to person and the meaning for therapy and counselling”. Hailoo, Netherlands.

Participants from: Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA.

### **The EMCAPP e-Journal** *Christian Psychology Around the World*

Each of the first eight issues of the journal had an individual country as its overall focus, and the articles were published in English and in the language of the focus country. It was decided in 2016 that the concentration on a focus country would be dropped and that future issues of the journal would concentrate on one important topic in Christian psychology. Each previous issue, as listed below, is available on the internet, hosted by the website of the IGNIS Academy of Christian Psychology (<http://emcapp.ignis.de>):

<b>No.</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Focus</b>
1	2012	Poland
2	2012	Germany
3	2013	Russia
4	2013	Switzerland
5	2014	United States
6	2015	Finland
7	2015	Canada
8	2016	South Africa
9	2016	Therapy goals
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**SECTION I:**  
**ANTHROPOLOGY**

# THE CONCEPT OF PERSON AS ANTHROPOLOGICAL BASIS FOR CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

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## **Abstract**

Inspired by Christian anthropology, psychology and psychotherapy adopt important premises concerning human nature. The human person is both a cognitive subject (an agent of cognitive reflection) and a subject of cognition (reflected upon by oneself and others). Psychology should consider the double aspect (objective and subjective) of human life and cognition. Psychotherapy is oriented towards helping people in developing and overcoming obstacles on their way towards achieving optimal development. Christian psychology and psychotherapy should not be equated with ideology. Drawing from philosophy, theology and psychology, anthropological premises make a solid scientific foundation for thorough empirical research and the consequent interpretation of results.

Humans, as rational and free beings, are capable of dialogue and development. Besides, in the context of Christian theology, humans are perceived as called for sainthood but injured by sin and inclined to do evil. Initially human nature was created good, but due to original sin we tend to do evil and thus fall into sin. Sin is understood as alienation from a good and healthy relation with God, other people and nature. Furthermore, a person's maturity is measured by their synergetic ability to integrate opposing attitudes and tendencies in life, such as immanence and transcendence, the sacred and the profane, anxiety and fascination, subjectivity and objectivity, independence and obedience.

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Christian psychologists and psychotherapists make extensive use of the achievements of contemporary psychology but employ a Christian view of humankind and the world to verify the theses and assumptions about life and health proposed by other psychological schools. A Christian orientation accepts the existence of God and His influence on the lives of individuals and societies as the ultimate truth. These concepts of humankind and God allow the manifestations of religious life to be interpreted and applied to intrapsychic functioning and interpersonal relationships. This premise forms the ground for dialogue with other trends and tendencies in psychology.

**Keywords:** Concept of a person; Christian psychology; Christian psychotherapy; existence of God; maturity; synergetic experiences

## Introduction

The development of psychology is driven by a desire to understand human beings, their feelings and actions, and to provide effective assistance in their development and overcoming of various difficulties. Achieving these goals requires a convergence of two research strategies: induction and deduction. Concepts from philosophy and psychology concerning human beings and their functioning are constantly supplemented with new information from empirical research. These concepts, verified by numerous experimental research endeavors, obtain their import in the context of an effort to understand human beings holistically, with due regard for anthropological theses that may give in-depth meaning to the results of empirical psychological research. Revealing the complex reality of human life is a difficult process that demands diverse methodologies and interdisciplinary communication.

The difficulty of reconciling this theory and empiricism lies in the use of language, as different words and concepts are used to describe common phenomena and processes. However, striving for such reconciliation is a worthy cause, offering the prospect of a more complete study of the reality of human life. Even a cursory analysis of the main theses of anthropology, philosophy, theology, sociology and psychology shows that the basic and most widely used term is “person”. Indeed, in both philosophical anthropology and psychology the concept of a person plays a key role, although it is often used in different contexts that are not very precisely distinguished.

The aim of these considerations is to show the importance of the person, in terms of Christian anthropology, for a more in-depth understanding of human beings and for developing a more effective psychotherapeutic practice. For this purpose, important aspects of personal human existence will first be extracted. Next, the value of a personal approach to the study of psychological and psychotherapeutic activities will be shown. Lastly, the value of theological inspiration for interpreting psychological facts and for psychotherapeutic practice will be presented.

A personalistic interpretation of human experience and behaviour has a significant history in philosophical, theological and psychological thought. Many psychologists use the word “person” to denote humankind. Others, speaking about a person, pay attention to their attributes and way of existence.

### **Differentiated Approach and Definition of a Person**

The word “person” (Latin *persona*, Greek *prosopon*) originally referred to an acting mask through which the voice of the actor echoed (*per-sonare*). The actor thus expressed certain experiences and established contact with the environment through signaling (or hiding) their own feelings. This intentional dimension of communication of specific feelings assumed the coexistence of subjectivity and objectification. Being the author of the message, the actor used a persona to communicate important information to the environment (Mroczkowski 2012). Here, we touch upon an important dimension of human identity. The concept of a person is always associated with the search for identity.

Over centuries, philosophical and theological thought has contributed to the discovery of significant new content hiding behind the notion of a person. In the stream of perennial philosophy – whose tradition includes the views of Aristotle and Plato, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Immanuel Kant and Paul Newman, Karol Wojtyła and Gabriel Marcel – the discovery of the truth about being oneself and being a person has taken place. The ancient philosophers pointed out that different contexts for understanding a person could be identified, and this initiated two trends in the study of a person. Plato, the founder of a relational approach, stressed the significance to a person of entities located beyond them, external to them, whereas Aristotle, the precursor of a substantial approach, was interested in their interior ontic content and