

The Theory and Practice of Christian Psychology in Europe

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Edited by

Nicolene L. Joubert

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FOREWORD

This book is a rich and varied contribution to the developing field of Christian psychology and should be required reading for anyone interested in the subject, along with the previous such volume by members of the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy. The contents of this volume, although biblical in approach, range across Christian denominations, including Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and various kinds of Protestant understandings. The authors are at universities or in private practice in countries ranging from England to Russia, with many stops in between. This multiplicity of approaches makes it clear that although there is a common core of Christian psychology, the different denominations and geographical regions present different positive emphases. One consequence of this variety of European approaches is that there are lots of new and relevant references for us here in the US and probably for scholars and therapists in other countries as well.

This kind of variety is needed in the development of any new field, such as Christian understanding of psychology, and fortunately the essays themselves are all of high quality. It is interesting to note that there is nothing here based on any theory of psychology or psychotherapy, such as psychoanalysis, cognitive behavioural theory, or emotion-focused therapy. Rather, the approaches address Christian issues that can be useful for psychology in general and, in particular, in psychotherapy. There is no treatment of the virtues as is common today in the US and to some degree elsewhere. The primary emphasis here is on prayer, spirituality, and the nature of the person from a Christian perspective. There is also a special interest in therapy that will help patients suffering from trauma and addiction.

I hope that this book, with its mainly European authors and focus, will serve as further stimulus to others working on Christian psychology in African, Asian, Middle Eastern and South American environments.

Paul C. Vitz, Ph.D.

Senior Scholar/Professor, Divine Mercy University
Professor Emeritus of Psychology, New York University

PREFACE

This volume of articles on Christian therapy is the second one by members of The European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy (EMCAPP). The authors are all psychologists, psychotherapist and theologians seeking to develop and apply a sound biblically based approach to mental health and soul care. The quest to glorify God as a Triune God while coming alongside those who suffer is ever-present in these contributions.

Members of EMCAPP have held regular symposia since 1996 to discuss and develop ideas and models on a distinct Christian therapy. These discussions on a diversity of themes related to Christian therapy eventually led to a decision to publish their works and share valuable knowledge and research findings with a broader audience. (The history of the founding of EMCAPP, the formulation of seven statements on its purpose and a declaration on five main positions within psychotherapy is described in the article following the introduction in this volume.)

The decision to publish a second volume was steered by the need to continue the conversation about a distinct Christian therapy as viewed and developed mainly in Europe. The authors come from Germany, Poland, Finland, Ukraine, Russia, Switzerland and South Africa. Their contributions represent different theological positions in the Christian faith tradition, each having an important space in the overarching context of Christian therapy.

The task of expressing a diversity of views and beliefs in one publication is challenging but intensely rewarding. The book displays the underlying unity between the authors in terms of their Christian faith and belief in the existence of a personal God who is the creator of human beings. It also expresses the belief that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of humankind and our Healer.

Disseminating relevant knowledge among academics and professionals is essential to advance the development of Christian therapy and stimulate further conversation. The book is intended not only to share ideas and Christian psychological and psychotherapeutic models but also to encourage greater unity amongst believers in a 21st century approach to mental health and soul care.

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INTRODUCTION

NICOLENE L. JOUBERT

This second volume on a Christian approach to psychotherapy and counselling written by members of the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy (EMCAPP) contains significant contributions from various Christian psychologists and theologians practising in Europe and South Africa. The board of EMCAPP decided to publish a second volume reflecting a biblical perspective on various mental health challenges to stimulate further discussion and development of this approach. The book could also be a resource for Christian mental health professionals and students.

The first volume, titled *Psychology and Psychotherapy in the Perspective of Christian Anthropology*, contains various essays from European-based practitioners in the fields of psychology, psychotherapy and counselling. In that volume Christian anthropology is articulated as a foundation for the theories, approaches and techniques applied in practice by its contributors. The authors draw on scientific knowledge from the fields of psychology, psychotherapy and theology, focusing on intrapsychic aspects of human functioning as well as interpersonal and ecosystemic functioning. The authors consider spirituality as an intrinsic part of human functioning through which persons seek meaning and transcendence. A wide range of topics were covered in the first volume, which lays a foundation for a European-based discourse on Christian psychology and psychotherapy. In the second volume the discourse continues and is advanced through a collection of distinguished scholarly articles.

In the first article, Anna Ostaszewska provides an overview and update on the activities of EMCAPP. She narrates the origin and vision of the movement and how it has developed since its inception in 2006. The article outlines and explains the seven foundational statements of EMCAPP, the first one being that there is a God who is actively maintaining this world, and therefore there cannot be any discussions about people without talking about God. The author further discusses the five main positions of EMCAPP that formed part of their Declaration in 2006. These positions depend on the belief system and method of practice

of the therapist. The author further provides a chronological overview of the EMCAPP symposia held between December 2006 and September 2019. EMCAPP has also published an e-journal, *Christian Psychology Around the World*. The first eight issues focused on individual countries and the work done in Christian psychology and psychotherapy in each country. Three webinars were presented between 2017 and 2019. In 2021 EMCAPP launched a new project aiming at having “Small Meetings” online for members and those interested in joining the movement.

The next article, by Nicolene Joubert, presents a biblical perspective on global collective trauma, resilience and social transformation. Collective trauma is viewed as a cataclysmic event that shatters the basic fabric of social life and often damages people’s bonds of attachment. It impairs the prevailing sense of community and safety, yet it could also lead to communities pulling together in solidarity to support each other. The author explains the impact of collective trauma on society and addresses the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine war as the most recent collective traumas to hit the world. While COVID-19 has been slowing down at the time of writing, the Russia–Ukraine conflict has been escalating, causing additional mass trauma. There is no doubt that both disasters have caused severe losses worldwide and torn at the very fabric of society, bringing suffering to millions of people.¹ It is important to help sufferers create hope by developing the perspective that such trauma will end, and in this article a biblical perspective is presented to encourage clients to believe so and to instil hope. This is done with comparative reference to the collective trauma narratives of ancient Israel. Based on these narratives and the way Israel responded and found hope in YHWH, the author presents a therapeutic action plan.

The next article is by Krzysztof Wojcieszek. He focuses on community as our real home. The author asserts that love is our deepest vocation and should be the foundation for this community. Human love always has two aspects – the material (feelings) and the immaterial (personal relationship). The author points out that most marriages are falling apart and argues that the main reason for this is a lack of understanding of the relationship between two people. It is critical to understand what love is in order to address this issue. To fully understand what love is, we should consider

¹ Traumatic suffering caused by intentional human events, such as war, raises questions about the goodness of God and the stability of humankind. The current Russia–Ukraine war has caused indelible harm to large groups of people. EMCAPP represents authors and counsellors dedicated to counselling traumatised victims and working towards forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration for those who are suffering.

both the material and immaterial sides of human beings. The author bases his description of the meeting “places” in a person on the Aristotelian-Thomistic model. These places are not based only on the nervous system but also on the immaterial aspect of the intellect. The reader is challenged to participate in the discourse by reassessing the reductionistic view of human existence and to reflect deeply on the meaning of “words of the heart”.

Romuald Jaworski writes a thought-provoking article on the periodisation of religious development. He proposes that religious development can be divided into historical periods and argues that religion represents an important element of human life that involves all spheres of existence; it has been analysed particularly as an interpersonal relationship with God, which takes place in religious experiences. He gives an overview of previous concepts of developmental periodisation and distinguishes seven stages of religious development, namely the trust phase, deserving phase, community phase, freedom phase, mission phase, creativity phase and perseverance phase. In his discussion he draws on the fields of philosophy, theology, psychology of religion, and psychological knowledge about interpersonal relationship.

The article by Werner May contains a discourse on Christian identity. The author argues that Christian identity entails more than a modern or postmodern view. The classical modern understanding of identity is described as the ontic identity. The author discusses various models of identity and explains how identity develops during adolescence, though he stresses that its formation is a lifelong process. He covers the postmodern view of identity formation based on construction and narrative. He then presents his preferred Christian identity as agape identity, a special form of dialogical identity. He expands on the formation of agape identity, which starts with the love of God. The author argues that the digital future we are facing may greatly impact the formation of identity but concludes that the love of God will be an anchor as it is the answer to a deep, heartfelt longing for a real encounter, which a digital future cannot destroy.

Samuel Pfeifer has written an insightful article on prayer. He asserts that prayer is the most frequent expression of spirituality, around the world and in all cultures. He refers to several definitions and functions of prayer, for example the view that prayer is the entering into contact with a “culturally postulated superhuman” (Spilka 2005) with the aim of relationship and exerting influence, and that prayer is an expression of thankfulness. He investigates the interaction between psychology and prayer and provides empirical evidence on the importance of the positive subjective effect of prayer, which is critical in life situations. He distinguishes

between ritual and dialogue and explains the ritualised function of prayer, which relates to communal prayer. Communal prayer can evoke a deep response in the individual and underline the sense of community. (The importance and impact of communal prayer is also underscored in the first article, by Nicolene Joubert, which investigates collective trauma from a biblical perspective.) Pfeifer includes in his article an indispensable section on ethical guidelines for the use of prayer in therapy, to be carefully considered by psychologists and psychotherapists.

Anna Ostaszewska highlights elements of Christian psychotherapy and gives evidence of the growing interest in integrating spirituality into psychological treatment. The author argues that the aim of psychotherapy is to heal psychological problems and that a psychotherapist should have enough knowledge to understand a client's beliefs and their context. This means that a therapist should respect a Christian client's beliefs and be able to distinguish between healthy and "unhealthy" spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, psychotherapists' own religious knowledge and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit are important. The author further provides information on research in the area of spirituality and available training offered by higher educational institutions in the field of Christian psychotherapy. She then discusses various elements of Christian psychotherapy that should be understood in accordance with Christian anthropology, such as the image of a human being, image of God, feelings of control, guilt versus neurotic feelings of guilt, and emotions and moral responsibility, among others. This article offers the reader insight into these elements and how they could be utilised in Christian psychotherapy.

Elena Strigo's article, titled "The moral word and reconstruction of the person in Christian psychotherapy", debates the constructive potential of a moral judgment in the therapeutic reconstruction of person in Christian psychotherapy. The author argues that the aim of Christian therapy is the reconstruction and recreation of the anthropological image of patients in accordance with their basic nature as human beings. This means that the therapeutic reconstruction of a person in Christian therapy involves uncovering and fulfilling the image and likeness of God in the person. The author further explores the concepts of good and evil and argues that the interrelation of nature and person unfolds itself in the exploration of the patient's personality by means of the symbolic power of a "moral word". The author refers to Luke 22:47–53 as a perfect example of the action of the moral word spoken by Jesus Christ when he said to Judas: "Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Here Jesus Christ provides an example of the pure, conscious, definite moral assessment of the situation,

taken as a whole, without any sign of aggression, violence, hatred or loss of control.

In his thought-provoking article, Andrey Lorgus focuses on intrapersonal conflict as a collision of different basic needs. He starts by providing a brief overview of the development of the existential approach to psychology in the 20th century. The author explains that the fundamental personality model, at least in psychotherapy, is based on two aspirations: *to be* (existence) and *to achieve self-worth*. He further states that to some extent they correlate with Maslow's hierarchy of needs model and Langle's fundamental motivations. Lorgus presents a new approach to basic needs based on a phenomenological picture of intrapersonal conflicts. He provides a graphic scheme of basic needs and argues that intrapersonal conflict arises when these needs pull in different directions. This can lead to complex conflicts, for example when one basic need gives rise to several different strategies for its implementation that are in conflict with each other, creating ambivalence. The author further explores the resolution of this conflict by means of case studies.

Ulla Dahlen has developed the "heart-house model", based on the Hebrew word *lebh* and the metaphor of a house. This concept is developed as a potential solution to her observation that the different approaches to psychotherapy, ranging from the cognitive and cognitive-behavioural to the psychodynamic, and from solution-focused to family therapy, offer valuable principles but seem insufficient to treat emotional challenges and psychological disorders. The heart-house model is encapsulated in the discourse in her article. The meaning of *lebh* is heart, and it refers to feelings, thinking and volition. These aspects of the heart are three rooms in the house. Anxiety is experienced in the feelings room; and performance, based on choice and thinking respectively, is experienced in the two other rooms. The author argues that the growing experience of living as the Father's beloved is reflected in each of these rooms. The author offers a practical model and metaphor for the integration of Christian faith and psychotherapy. She phrases this eloquently in the following statement: "The heart-house model offers an integrative Christian approach to psychotherapy and counselling by bringing together several theories with the Word of God."

The article by Marjatta Ollikainen describes a case study and psychotherapeutic process with a trauma survivor who has both type A and B trauma with both physical and psychological symptoms. These types of trauma relate respectively to the "absence of good things" normally required for personal well-being and to "bad events in the person's experience". The author chose for her study a client who had

experienced both type A and type B trauma. The client presented with typical survivor behaviour, using addictive and self-harming behaviour to regulate her symptoms. Ollikainen emphasises that the actual therapy is embedded in the therapeutic relationship. The therapy starts with creating a relationship that provides a safe space and trust. The author integrates several theories and approaches in the case study, with the main model being the Trauma-Informed Stabilization Treatment (TIST) model. The model is effective in treating clients who have addictions and self-destructive behaviour. The author discusses the defences and coping mechanisms as well as the themes that emerged during therapy.

The article by Paweł and Małgorzata Surma focuses on a 12-step recovery workshop as a method to integrate spirituality into the praxis of psychotherapy. The authors discuss how they present the programme as a practical means of integrating Christian spirituality into the recovery process. The message of the 12-step programme is analysed with an emphasis on spiritual growth. The authors provide interesting and valuable background information on the programme, stating that the *12 Steps to Living to the Full* recovery workshop has its roots in a Christian fellowship founded in 1921 by a Lutheran minister, Frank Buchman. The authors point out that the main emphasis of the group was on developing a personal bond with God by surrendering to Him wholeheartedly. The underlying principles of the work of the group were applied by the authors to develop a recovery workshop that focuses on advancing the spiritual growth of the participants.

Olga Krasnikova writes a meaningful, reflective article on the specific characteristics of Christian Orthodox psychotherapy and counselling. She provides a brief overview of the development of Christian psychology and psychotherapy in Russia, mentioning the two noteworthy publications, by Nichiporov (1994) and Bratus (1995), that began this development. She asserts that more specialists are becoming convinced that the concept of person cannot be considered apart from Christian anthropology. Her focus is on how cultural and moral Christian values can be manifested in the practice of spiritually focused psychotherapy that is done with believing Christians from the Orthodox or Catholic traditions. The author shows how Christian values influence the world and how one can change oneself on the basis of spirituality-oriented psychotherapy by applying consecutive steps. Spiritually orientated psychotherapists could benefit from this article in terms of finding direction for their work.

Marjaana Jurvainen-Broms has written a substantive and thought-provoking article on narcissism. Firstly, she examines how the individual sense of self originates in the ways a child senses its mother from birth.

When the relationship between a mother and child is “good enough”, the mother can attune her actions to the child’s needs. However, a mother is not always able to do so, and this affects the personality development of the child. Secondly, the author distinguishes between thin-skinned and thick-skinned narcissism on the basis of a psychoanalytical understanding of narcissism. She argues that personality is organised in different ways for the two types of narcissism. The difference stems from the way a child develops in his/her relationship with their mother or primary caregiver. The interesting concept of “psychic skin” is presented. It refers to the idea that a child experiences the way their mother holds them as “skin” around them. When the “psychic skin” that develops in early childhood leads to deep disappointment a child may develop narcissism. The development of thin-skinned versus thick-skinned narcissism depends on the structure of their personalities. This article provides an interesting and thought-provoking perspective on a relevant topic.

Roland Mahler writes on two relevant concepts in Christian counselling, namely conscience and faith, and how they may be handled in the therapeutic relationship. These concepts have been prominent in the Protestant tradition of the 20th century. Conscience is conceptualised in the mystical tradition, the monasticism of the anchorites and coenobites, Gregory the Great and Meister Eckhart. The author asserts that conscience serves as a barometer to show people how lost they are and that they cannot help themselves. Faith is turning this awareness of being lost into hope in the perspective of the offer of grace. Faith is grounded in the reality of a confrontation which forces a decision of choice between lostness and salvation. Mahler asserts that it is only from the acknowledgement of guilt by the conscience that faith grows. Thus, conscience gives us orientation and ultimately leads us into a relationship with Jesus Christ. The author relates the orientation function of conscience to therapeutic work by highlighting that the hope and certainty of not being alone are central aspects of self-efficacy. The need for empirical studies on the function of conscience and its formation in the pedagogical and psychotherapeutic process is highlighted.

Friedemann Alsldorf presents his thoughts on the process of therapeutic goal setting in Christian psychotherapy. The author asserts that conventional goal setting in therapy consists of three perspectives, those of the therapist, the client and the therapy researcher. In Christian psychotherapy the question arises whether goals are defined from the client’s point of view, the therapist’s point of view, or God’s will. In the light of biblical narratives a fourth perspective should be added, that of God’s will. Alsldorf explores this perspective, but he also challenges the

tendency to increase the depth of the therapy and highlights the danger in such an endeavour. The deeper the therapy, the greater the damage in cases of therapeutic failure. He further posits that aims should be communicated early and clearly in a therapy process. The “deeper” aim might not be the best. The reader is challenged by interesting and thought-provoking questions regarding goal setting in Christian counselling; for example, do we stick to a paternalistic model, a model of service or a model of negotiation? In this article these questions are considered, and tentative answers are developed.

In his second article, Roland Mahler addresses spiritual maturity. He poses the question whether spiritual maturity could be an aim or goal in Christian psychotherapy. He offers seven theses to explain his own definition of the term “spiritual maturity”. These theses require personal reflection and deep consideration of the following: the spiritual competences involved in a person’s voluntary existential decision to follow Christ; the readiness to offer up one’s freedom and autonomy for one’s love for Christ; a complex, non-linear process of existential growth in spiritual aspects of human personality that is initiated by the Holy Spirit and accompanied by other individuals; the unpredictable infusion of the spiritual progress made into the relationship between oneself, others and God; a deliberation on diverse aspects of the human condition and submission to the Holy Spirit; the integrative expression of Christ within the individual that is not determinable in terms of visible virtues; and the inner acceptance of one’s state of brokenness, in humility before God’s throne, that is not subject to human strivings towards perfection. The author’s conclusion is that spiritual maturity is not a specific goal in Christian psychotherapy, but it can be promoted by it.

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.emacpp.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, director 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: Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Lutheran. Representatives cooperate in organising national and international conferences in different countries and have met every year at the EMCAPP symposia. The EMCAPP e-journal, *Christian Psychology Around the World*, has been published since 2012. The EMCAPP project of webinar lectures started in 2017.

The EMCAPP website points to the diversity of the movement's participants and their efforts to advance the theory and practice of a Christian psychology. They strive cooperatively to achieve holistic individual identities as both psychologists and Christians and to fulfil their responsibilities to the scientific community, national health care system, psychologists associations and the church.¹

¹ EMCAPP, "Who we are", <https://emcapp.eu/who-we-are> (accessed May 9, 2020).

The seven statements of EMCAPP are as follows²:

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) – members.

The EMCAPP Declaration – 2006³

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

² EMCAPP, "Who we are".

³ EMCAPP, "The EMCAPP Declaration – 2006", <https://www.emcapp.eu/node/44> (accessed May 9, 2020).

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 reason⁴.
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

- 1996 (December 4–6):** EMCPA Symposium I, "Basic anthropological concepts in psychology" – Kitzingen, Germany. (Participants from Germany, Poland, United Kingdom.)
- 1999 (July 1–4):** Symposium II, "Grace in the process of psychotherapy" – Plock, Poland. (Participants from Canada, Germany, Poland, United Kingdom.)
- 2002 (October 28–30):** Symposium III, "What is agape?" – Kitzingen, Germany. (Participants from Denmark, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.)
- 2003 (September 22–24):** 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

⁴ The EMCAPP participants identify mainly with this position.

participants had a meeting with the Polish primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, who blessed the movement.

- 2004 (October 23–24):** Symposium V, “**Christian psychology and psychotherapy**” – Rome, Italy. (Participants from Germany, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom.)
- 2005 (November 28–30):** Symposium VI, “A Christian approach to the health of persons” – London. (Participants from Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.)
- 2006 (May 27–29):** EMCPA board meeting in Warsaw. Attended by Werner May (Germany), Mike Sheldon (UK) and Anna Ostaszewska (Poland). At this meeting the EMCAPP Declaration was formulated and established.
- 2007 (February 14–16):** Symposium VII, “Aims of Christian psychology” and “Spiritual maturity” – Warsaw, Poland. (Participants from Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.)
- 2008 (May 21–23):** 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.
- 2009 (June 26–28):** 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.
- 2010 (January):** EMCPA board meeting in Helsinki, Finland. Attended by Werner May (Germany; president), Anna Ostaszewska (Poland; vice-president), Toni Tehro (Finland), Elena Strigo (Russia) and Andrey Lorgus (Russia). The name of the movement was changed to the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy – EMCAPP.
- 2011 (May 2–5):** Symposium X, “Future of Christian anthropology, psychology and psychotherapy” – Moscow, Russia. (Participants from Austria, Germany, Italy, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Switzerland.)

- 2012 (September 3–6):** 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.)
- 2013 (September 9–12):** Symposium XII, “Specific healing factors in Christian psychotherapy” – Lviv, Ukraine. (Participants from Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Ukraine.)
- 2014 (October 2–6):** Symposium XIII, “Christian psychological models/explanations of psychological disorders” – Rome, Italy. (Participants from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Russia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA.)
- 2015 (September 10–13):** 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.)
- 2019 (March 22–24):** Conference organised by ACC Finland together with EMCAPP, “The meaning of relationship in Christian anthropology, psychology and psychotherapy and counseling” – Tampere, Finland.
- 2019 (September 13–14):** EMCAPP seminar, “Values and spirituality in psychology and psychotherapy”, during the European Congress of Christianity and Mental Health Sciences – Barcelona, Spain. (Participants from 18 countries all over the world.)

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>):

Book contributions

In 2018 the EMCAPP book *Psychology and Psychotherapy in the Perspective of Christian Anthropology*⁵ was published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. The book, edited by Nicolene Joubert, includes articles by EMCAPP members from various countries: Poland (Romuald Jaworski, Krzysztof Wojcieszek, Zenon Uchnast, Anna Ostaszewska), United Kingdom (Mike Sheldon, Trevor Griffiths), Germany (Wolfram Soldan, Werner May), Russia (Andrey Lorgus, Elena Strigo, Olga Krasnikova), Ukraine (Olena Yaremko), Italy (Francesco Cutino), Spain (Mar Alvarez Segura, Montserrat Lafuente), Finland (Saara Kinnunen) and South Africa (Nicolene Joubert).

In 2021 the book *Antropología Cristiana y Ciencias de la Salud Mental* [Christian anthropology and mental health sciences], edited by Mar Álvarez Segura, Martin F. Echavarría and Montserrat Lafuente Gil, was published in Madrid by Dykinson. The book includes articles by, among others, EMCAPP members from Germany (Werner May), Poland (Anna Ostaszewska, Krzysztof Wojcieszek), Spain (Mar Álvarez Segura, Montserrat Lafuente Gil) and South Africa (Nicolene Joubert).

The EMCAPP Small Meetings

In 2021 a new “EMCAPP Small Meetings” project was created. These are short meetings on Skype. In June 2021 the EMCAPP Board met a group of psychologists and psychotherapists from Poland via the internet.

A report by Anna Ostaszewska on the first meeting appears in volume 16 of the EMCAPP journal *Christian Psychology Around the World*.⁶

⁵ EMCAPP, “*Psychology and Psychotherapy in the Perspective of Christian Anthropology*”, <https://www.emcapp.eu/node/43> (accessed May 9, 2020).

⁶ “The EMCAPP Small Meeting: Who we are? The easiest way to meet Christian psychologists, psychotherapists and leaders from Europe”, 16, 2021, 53–55, https://emcapp.ignis.de/pdf/emcapp_journal_16.pdf.

GLOBAL COLLECTIVE TRAUMA, RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Traumatic events are defined as extremely unusual and shocking events that are life-threatening or are subjectively experienced as life-threatening. These may involve violent human acts or acts of God such as natural disasters. Collective trauma refers to events that affect large numbers of people at the same time. It has the potential to result in the development of post-traumatic pathology in a large group of people. The current COVID-19 pandemic is a global-scale traumatic and life-threatening event. It threatens the mental health of millions of people. It challenges social and cultural ways of life and spiritual beliefs. It calls for new and creative forms of resilience and willingness to change social behaviour. The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 shocked the world, and the impact of this event, which has developed into a full-scale war, is felt in all corners of the world. The history of the early Israelites also contains large-scale traumatic events, such as plagues and wars. The question arises of how ancient nations, such as the early Israelites, dealt with collective trauma. How can the history of Israel inform our response to collective trauma? How can our psycho-social knowledge of trauma and post-traumatic stress inform our interpretation of experiences of collective trauma in ancient Israel? In this article these questions are addressed. Global collective trauma is first discussed with reference to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine war. Creative forms of

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resilience and social behaviour change are then explored in the light of the history of ancient Israel as well as input from current medical and social sciences.

Keywords: collective trauma; COVID-19; life-threatening events; war; pandemic; ancient Israel; biblical narratives; post-traumatic stress; lament; resilience; transformation; Russia–Ukraine war.

Introduction

Traumatic events, described as unusual or shocking events, can be experienced either on an individual level and become personalised or on a collective level that impacts a large number of people, nations or the entire world (Birnbaum 2008). Such an event is experienced as life threatening and has major life consequences. An example of a global collective trauma would be an event that causes a multidimensional threat to the world's health, ecology, economy, and social stability. The COVID-19 pandemic falls into this category.

In this article collective trauma is defined and analysed through the lens of the collective narratives in ancient Israel. It is argued that biblical narratives of collective trauma in ancient Israel may be juxtaposed with our current experience of COVID-19 to provide meaning-making language that could help us overcome the challenges of the pandemic as a mass trauma. It could also inform a biblical therapeutic approach to the Russia–Ukraine war and those who reach out to support the war victims. The focus in the article is on COVID-19 as a collective trauma, but the current Russia–Ukraine war impacting millions of lives is also discussed.

The consequences of collective suffering are evident in both events and include loss of lives, the separation of family members, loss of income, a global financial crisis, threat of a food shortage worldwide, seeing and experiencing of war violence, displacement of millions, exhausted healthcare workers, and threats to the mental health of millions. Meaning making is an important psycho-socio-spiritual process required to make sense out of trauma, build resilience, and move forward. The article attempts to answer the question: How may the collective trauma narratives from ancient Israel shape meaning making and resilience in our postmodern world's suffering because of disease or war.

The article first considers significant features of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine war and global responses to them. Then an analysis of selected collective trauma narratives from ancient Israel is presented and juxtaposed with the pandemic. This is followed by a proposed therapeutic action plan and conclusion.

Onset and global responses

1. Onset of COVID-19

COVID-19 started at the end of December 2019 as cases of pneumonia were identified in Wuhan. The Chinese government informed the World Health Organization (WHO) on 31 December 2019 about these cases of “unknown pneumonia”. The cases increased quickly and spread through other regions of China and globally. This led to what the WHO eventually defined on 11 March 2020 as a global pandemic, and it developed into a public health emergency in less than four months. By 1 November 2020 close to 46 million people had been diagnosed with COVID-19 and one million had died worldwide. *The New York Times* reported on 24 May 2020 that US deaths were nearing 100 000, “an incalculable loss” (New York Times 2020). That number had exceeded one million by mid-June 2022 (Our World in Data 2022). There can be no doubt that the loss is incalculable.

The rapid increase of transmissions and the unpreparedness of health systems to respond caused a tremendous challenge to communities. It was clear early on that the pandemic could cause high levels of stress and had the potential to leave long-lasting psychological scars (Horesh and Brown 2020). Frontline workers, medical staff and healthcare workers are among those who were hit hardest with the onset of the pandemic as resources were stretched to the limit. The world has not seen such a global mass trauma since World War II, and it can be expected that there will be mental fallout long after the pandemic has become an endemic.

The pandemic as a collective trauma raises the issue of meaning in suffering and meaning in life. Furthermore, it raises the question of how we should respond as believers and how the church should respond to this event. The ongoing Russia–Ukraine war provides a significant challenge to the church and believers in discerning the clearest biblically based response. Historical relationships and previous wars, such as World War II, complicate the interpretation of the current war; it muddies the water, and it difficult to find a clear direction in meaning making. The collective trauma narratives of ancient Israel provide a resource to this end as they can be applied to shape meaning making and build resilience in our postmodern world suffering from the mass trauma caused by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the current Russia–Ukraine war.

It is argued that meaning making is an important psycho-socio-spiritual process required to make sense out of trauma, build resilience, and move forward. Biblical narratives of collective trauma in ancient Israel could be juxtaposed with our current experience of COVID-19 to shape meaning-

making language, help us overcome the challenges of the pandemic, build resilience, and prevent the development of psychopathology. Likewise, it can provide meaning-making language and build resilience in everyone affected by the current Russia–Ukraine war, which is leaving millions of people displaced and in need of assistance. UNICEF has reported that one hundred days of war in the Ukraine had left 5.2 million children in need of humanitarian assistance (UNICEF 2022). Another report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has recorded that the civilian casualties in Ukraine by 22 June 2022 were 4 634 killed and 5 769 injured (OHCHR 2022). The longer the war continues, the more lives are lost and families are deeply and tragically affected.

2. Global responses to COVID-19

Almost every country was hit by the pandemic early on. The unpreparedness of health systems and governments worldwide led to a variety of responses. Governments at different levels and government agencies each decided how to respond, and reactions differed from a zero-COVID-19 aim and strict lockdown regulations to a light approach and hope that herd immunity would develop. On a global level the United Nations proposed intersectoral work, allowing sectors outside of health sectors to make decisions to curb the spread of the virus effectively. The reason was that the control and prevention of infectious disease could not be handled by the health sector alone and demanded support and input from other governmental sectors (Zhao and Wong 2021). The responses of mainland China, Macao and Hong Kong supported the necessity and effectiveness of Whole-of-Government (WoG) and Health in All Policies (HiAP) approaches.

In mainland China several actions were very quickly taken to research, control and combat the virus; for instance, in the province of Hubei local authorities immediately assigned three institutions to conduct epidemiological studies (29 December 2019); one day later, an emergency note was sent out by the Wuhan authorities (Zhao and Wong 2021). The Municipal Health Commission requested medical institutions to compile reports on unknown pneumonia cases; the National Health Commission (NHC) began an investigation into the cause of this disease (30 December 2019); experts were sent to help with ongoing investigation; the People's Liberation Army dispatched more than 4 000 medical staff to Wuhan; the central government and other provinces sent 346 medical teams to Hubei; gyms and exhibition centres were converted into shelter hospitals to isolate patients with mild symptoms; and early in February 2020 two temporary hospitals were built (Zhao and Wong 2021). Furthermore, a collaborative

attempt was made to collect and disseminate relevant data and discoveries. These measures enabled China to control and combat the COVID-19 virus effectively. The country set an example of the effectiveness of a quick response across government sectors in responding to a pandemic.

The above discussion highlights how global responses varied according to policies and action across the health sector and other government sectors, the value placed on scientific knowledge and guidance, the strength of the public health system, and economic resources and structures. In many countries the guidelines for combating the pandemic as given by the WHO became the norm, for instance lockdown measures, social distancing, mask wearing, regular handwashing, and sanitisation of surfaces and work areas (Zhao and Wong 2021). Despite the differences in responses, it is unarguable that people have been suffering globally on all levels of existence – medically, socially, psychologically, economically, and spiritually.

3. Global responses to the Russia–Ukraine war

Many European countries are accepting Ukrainian refugees and providing shelter and food to families. Twenty-five UNICEF–UNHCR Blue Dots have been established. The Blue Dots are safe havens that provide support and services for families on the move. The route with the Blue Dots has been established through neighbouring countries, including Moldova, Romania, Poland, Italy, Bulgaria and Slovakia. More than 52 000 refugees, mostly in female-headed households, have been reached by the UNICEF assistance programme (UNICEF 2022).

UNICEF also reports how children are threatened by the war and how they are being helped to resist the destruction and build resilience (<https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en>). For example, youth camps are held in West Ukraine, trauma therapy is provided for children, and Kiev volunteers offer free creative classes to help the children deal with the effects of war.

Further to this, efforts must be made to cope with the financial impact of the war, which is evident in the rising gas prices and the threat of a food shortage worldwide.

A theology of suffering – biblical and theological background

Theologians have always reflected on issues of suffering in the world and the theodicy question – the claim that God is in a relationship with the world (Rambo 2011). The question seeks to provide an answer to the