

The Gospel and Society
Psychology
Session Four
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In a cartoon, an elderly lady asks a book store clerk where she might find a Bible:
“Bibles? They are in the self help section.”

In 1978, when Dr. Scott Peck wrote *The Road Less Traveled*, psychology entered the popular culture.

Since the publication of this book, the most popular section in a large book store is the self-help department.

Dr. Peck, a MD and psychiatrist, offended many in the theological and psychological community’s primary by writing this best selling book first. (The Road was on the NY Times bestseller list for 7 1/2 years – it’s Biblical) Fewer were offended by his effort to synthesized science, psychology, and religion.

From the time Sigmund (it was Sigismund before his first book) Freud’s stated that *‘religion itself is a universal obsession neurosis’* there has been an on again-off again love affair between religion and psychology.

Freud was the oldest son of his father’s beautiful and much younger second wife. After his father’s death, Freud’s self-analysis revealed the peak of his neurosis and the major theme around which all his psychological work evolved, including his work on religion – the Oedipus Complex. This is positioned as an unconscious jealousy of and aversion to one’s father (including God, the Father) who personifies authority, refusal, and compulsion, and at the same time a passion for a youthful mother.

“If a man has been his mother’s undisputed darling he retains through-out life the triumphant feeling, the confidence to success, which not seldom brings actual success along with it.”

Freud’s critical analysis of religion started in the Anti-Semitic Vienna of his youth and the Catholic ritualism of his nanny. At the age of 35, Freud received as a birthday gift from his father a Bible, with the inscription in Hebrew; *“It was in the seventh year of your age that the spirit of God began to move you to learning. I would say the spirit of God speaketh to you: ‘Read in My Book; there will be opened to thee sources of knowledge of the intellect.’”*

Freud admitted that as a youngster reading the Bible made a strong impression on him, but he was always in tension with it. *“When I was six years old and was given my first lessons by my mother, I was expected to believe that we were all made of earth and must therefore return to earth. This did not suit me and I expressed doubts of the doctrine.”*

This tense was expressed through out Freud’s career even to the opening of his private practice on Easter Sunday, and his statement when asked about the source of the inner strength of religious ideas: *“They are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes.”*

Freud’s basic organizing systems were;

1. The unconscious is only a reservoir of repressed wishes,
2. All intentions beyond the instinct for self-preservation are ascribed to sexual wishes,
3. The individual structure of the psyche is merely retrospective, and could only be understood in light of past events, and not prospectively in light of meaning and purpose in life.

These beliefs and Freud’s suspicious and complete personality caused his two leading disciples to abandon him within months of each other.

Alfred Adler, the father of Individual Psychology and leader of the *“inferiority drives superiority”* school was excommunicated along with seven other doctors from the Psycho-Analytical Union in Vienna.

Carl Jung left one year later, in 1914. Jung in his book *Symbols of Transformation* rejected Freud sexual theory and pursued the task of analyzing the human psyche, both conscious and unconscious, in the whole complexity of its relationships and potentialities, in his theory called *‘Analytical Psychology.’*

Scott Peck and many of the *‘spiritual’* writers in the self-help section are followers of Jung’s writings and his concept of *‘Individualization.’*

We could spend the rest of our life reading about Jung and Christian Spirituality.

The story of Jesus in the Gospels, from his birth to his death is understood by many in the Jungian school of psychology as the process of Individuation. From the words; *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way”* to *“lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age”* we can read the Gospels as an unfolding of God’s plan for all his children and the coming of God to all his children.

Let me summarize, first biblically and second psychologically the process of Individuation.

- In the Bible, God's preexistent, only begotten Son empties himself of his divinity and is incarnated as a man through the agency of the Holy Ghost who impregnates the Virgin Mary. He is born in humble surroundings accompanied by numinous events and survives grave initial dangers. When he reaches adulthood he submits to baptism by John the Baptist and witnesses the descent of the Holy Ghost signifying his vocation, He survives temptation by the Devil and fulfills his ministry which proclaims a benevolent, loving God. After agonizing uncertainty, he accepts his destined fate, preaches and performs miracles and then allows himself to be arrested, tried, mocked and crucified. After three days in the tomb, according to many witnesses, he is resurrected. For forty days he walks and talks with his disciples and then ascends to heaven. Ten days later, at Pentecost, the Holy Ghost descends of the Church. The story begins and ends with the same image – the descent of the Holy Ghost. Just as the first Annunciation is followed by the birth of Christ, so the second Annunciation is followed by the birth of the Church. (Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14, par 28, note 194)
- In Jung, the inner journey is called the process of Individuation, the process of becoming one's own self or coming to selfhood. The individuation process depends on the establishment of a relatively well-developed ego that has a realistic sense of one's own areas of competence in the social and professional arena, in the life of the family, and in the world. Each individual is born with a whole array of potentialities, many of which are opposed to and in conflict with each other. This is the collective unconscious, and some of these potentialities are developed while others are left untouched. The first stage of ego development is the persona, the conscious part played for the audience of parents and teachers. A compensatory part is the unconscious soul part that is revealed through 'spiritual' activities, (dreams, meditation, and prayer). The persona is the archetype which sets thing moving from the collective unconscious, a process of differentiation and making choices. The soul, by compensatory growth, leads the psyche towards integration through the realization of all its potentialities, even those that are mutually opposed (E-I). Later in his work Jung uses 'anima' (femininity) and 'animus' (masculinity) rather than soul. The process of individuation, ends for the individual not in the achievement of self, but in the enrichment of the culture and collective unconscious. Jung wrote; *"Analysis should release an experience that grips us or falls upon us as from above, an experience that has substance and body such as those things which occurred to the ancients. If I were going to symbolize it I would choose the Annunciation."*

From Dr. Phil, - *'the number one fear among all people is rejection, the number one need among all people is acceptance'* (Life Strategies, p49) to Ken Blanchard, the One Minute Manager, who now tells us that *"It Takes Less Than One Minute To Suit Up For The Lord,"* we find a parallel with psychological growth and spiritual growth.

The parallel is experienced most personally in the 12-step programs launched by Mr. Bill as AA, after consultation with Jung.

For many of us the phenomenon that weaves the Good News of the Gospel and good news of psychology together has been or is the *'midlife crisis,'* which can happen at 35, 55, or 75.

This phenomenon is both psychological and theological; it changes both our view of our selves and our view of God.

With current information about this *'crisis'* provided by films and books, many of us are on the look out for it in ourselves and in our friends.

When we see a middle-aged colleague behaving in surprising ways; we know they have entered this area of liminality. Perhaps you are feeling the stirring deep within your soul, and you want to know what's going on and what to expect.

Freudian would say that this stirring is result of a defective childhood.

The Jungian school offers more of a spiritual answer.

In all of life we are in a spiritual and psychological developmental process, and thus subject to internal flux and change.

At midlife, we are open to again hear the voice of God or the beckoning of the devil. I believe that at midlife we experiences a crisis of the spirit expressed in three areas – the 3 M's.

- Money
- Marriage
- Medical

If it is in 1 or 2 you are lucky.

When we are thrown into a psychological emergency in one of these areas, one view is to see the soul at work trying to bring us in a clear parallel with God's plan.

The crisis is seen in three ways or stages, which are developed by the mythologist Joseph Campbell in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and which I term. (Campbell's term)

1. The Call
2. The Challenge (quest)
3. The Collection (return)

Some new adventure is presented to us in our profession or community. We accept the challenge and take on the hard work, find ourselves tested and at times rescued from the forces that wish to limit or destroy us. Finally, we accomplish the goals, find the hidden treasure, and return a gift to our community of family and friends.

This is the spiritual journey of following Christ.

We hear his voice, we take up his work, and we share the Good News.

A Jungian analyst, Murray Stein, writes about this in detail in his book *In Midlife, a Jungian Perspective*.

One way of weaving together theology and psychology is by understanding the Christ of scripture as a symbol of the inner reality of God that guides us through this and other crises. That is not all He is, but Christ can be understood as the interior reality, or guide, for our life. This can be thought of as prayerful discernment or spiritual direction or depth psychology. One writer, Thomas Kane, put it this way:

“There is a coming to know myself. But there is also a coming to know Jesus as he is presented in the gospels, if we are faithful to the gospel stories, if we don't impose our meanings on them, but slowly let them disclose their meanings to us. Then the Lord of the gospels will have become the Lord of our lives. (Carl Jung and Christian Spirituality, p184)

The inner spiritual self tries to communicate with the outer self. The message of the Gospel, its stories and symbols can lead us on a journey to our inner depths, where our attitudes and impulses, are revealed in dreams and artistic expressions.

For example, when we read the story of Jesus' Baptism:

- Going into the water
- Coming out of the water
- Heavens open
- Spirit comes like a dove
- Blessing of the Lord

This story can be read as Biblical history or as meditation, where we go to see the Baptist, we go down under the water, we are washed clean, and we receive the blessing that changes our lives.

The process of individuation is a matter of reversing false identifications of the ego with the collective conscious and with the collective unconscious, of withdrawing projections whether they be in the realms of the shadow, of the anima or animus, or of archetypal symbols: and of ceasing to allow oneself to be swayed and derailed by the projections others may have placed on us.

We emerge as a conscious unity where we live a life with simple and true giving and receiving, with real reciprocity, with genuine self-knowledge, without ulterior motives, and with an integrated totality.

Jung himself described this state as hard to find, it not impossible without outside help, from a higher and deeper authority than the ego.

The ego is not identified with this authority, but receives from it, so that a person is enabled to forge his life and his work with all the energy at this disposal, and at the same time to give his life and his work over to God, to let God do with it whatever He chooses.

This is very close to what Jung identified as the culmination of the individuation process, where opposites are reconciled.

This process includes the reconciliation of the ultimate opposites in human personality, the spirit and body. This brings about a union with God, a dependence on God alone which is the fruit of the spiritual journey.

Some Jungians are reluctant to accept an interpretation of the 'still small voice' as the voice of God.

Christian tradition declares that this 'voice' in us is not just the voice of the 'self' but the voice of a higher authority, a Holy Spirit.

“And I pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him or knows him, you know him for he dwells with you, and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17)

This innermost region of our interiority is, in the Christian tradition, no longer ourselves, but the place of grace, where the gift of God's love is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

While most Jungians understand this center as merely a symbol of the self, some in the fundamental church circles believe a study of Jungian psychology leads believers away from the ‘truth.’

In these opposites, we may find a ground for both our spiritual and psychological growth as the Children of God.

I will end with a note from a friend, Robert Moore:

While a Jungian psychoanalyst speaking from within the disciplinary horizons of psychology cannot pronounce the manifestations of the Self to be manifestations of a Divine Reality, it is clear that the psychological reality being described corresponds to what, from a spiritual or theological perspective, has been called the God or Spirit within. From the point of view of the spiritual quest the essential truth attested to by both Jungian psychology and human spiritual tradition is that human life must find a center of guidance outside of the ego. (Carl Jung and Christian Spirituality, Robert Moore, pxi)

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