

Creation, according to my orthodox faith, is the Creator "doing his thing," which includes maintenance ("providence"), which includes major repairs ("redemption") and integration ("parousia," "eschatology," "salvation-deliverance-'kingdom'"). He does his thing from beyond ("Father"), among ("Son"), and within ("Spirit"). The impediments to his doing his thing are external to his being but internal to his creation (which resistances constitute "sin"), and his character ("holy") forbids his violating the rights of his creation ("human freedom") to hurry his ends. The consequent slow ("sanctification"), costly ("cross") process of moving toward his ends (inclusively, "shalom" = liberation, fulfilment in convergence of justice and joy, praise) is the ever-renewed offer of relationship ("covenant"), through which alone the alienated creature can find healing-wholeness, the complete diet: "My food is to do his will" (Jn.-.34), my drink is "a spring of water that keeps on bubbling up within...for eternal life" (vs.14)....This thinksheet assumes this biblical understanding of "integration" and of "therapy" as theocentric, in which perspective the first term means more than getting your or our (interpersonal, or even panhuman) thing together and the second term means more than functional restoration to "health."

MEDITATIONAL EXERCISE: Imagine the counselor in loco dei, in God's place throughout the above world-picture. On the back of this sheet, work out a consequent definition of imago dei: What, now, does it mean that we are made "in the image of God"? Then continue reading this thinksheet.

1. By reverse osmosis, let's ask "What does God hunger and thirst for?" If we use the food-drink analog for motivation, the question becomes "What motivates God?" Foolish, unavoidable question! How the question is shaped reveals the provenance: "What do the gods want?" "What does life demand of us?" "Magic" is efforts to manipulate the divine-demonic to our wants: "religion" is discovering and doing what God wants, however "God" is conceived-defined....Now, biblically, what God wants is his creation's free cooperation, which he does not need ("aseity") but wants ("communion"). When his offer of faithful love ("chesed") is rejected, he suffers ("patheia," "Passion"), judges ("wrath"), renews the offer--persists without insisting....Think through this as modeling for the counselor.

2. SOME NAMES: Lewis J. Sherrill (THE STRUGGLE OF THE SOUL) sees the image of God as our development-growth drive to self-actualization (as Maslow, Rogers, et al). Jn. M. Butler and Laura N. Rice (U. of Chicago Counseling Center, VI.12. 1960) see the hunger for stimulus [leading to the self-stimulus we call "thought"] as the ground of our symbolic capacities....which is close to Teilhard's convergence of biology-psychology-metaphysics in the evolutionary drive through the biosphere to the noosphere [the sphere of symbol and therefore meaning], a drive even stronger than maintenance needs, including food-water and healing and bio-life itself. [Can you count on all THAT as clergy?] John B. Cobb's natural theology of imago dei depends on Whitehead's conviction that we have an innate need to experience ever-larger circles of novelty organized in patterns of harmony/contrast. What do you make of all this vis-a-vis "therapy" and "integration"? What does Viktor Frankl, without referring to any of the above names, make of it in his THE WILL TO MEANING?

3. In the "client-centered-therapy" list of conditions for personality-change, try putting biblical-theological terms on the stages: (1) The two are in contact; (2) The counselee is in conscious incongruence, and thus vulnerable and anxious; (3) The counselor, in the relationship, is congruent; (4) experiencing unconditional positive regard toward the counselee and (5) an empathetic understanding of the counselee's internal frame of reference; and (6) The counselee somewhat perceives conditions #4 and #5....Now, for similarities and differences, compare this set of principles with, above, the first paragraph and section 1."

AN OVERARCHING QUESTION: To what extent, severally, is Western psychotherapy an extrapolation from (1) nature [Maslow et al] and (2) nurture [the Western images-ideas of God and person]?