

SYNESIS

a faith & reason journal



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Synesis

Our Mission

Vanderbilt Synesis is a journal of Christian thought and expression that strives to be a platform for thoughtful and creative articulation of a Christian worldview. We aim to promote dialogue around Christianity and its relevance to all areas of life and the university.

Synesis

[syn.e.sis], *noun*

a bright, God-sent sudden (but not temporary) understanding



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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

A Pew Research Center survey¹ recently declared that American Christianity is in rapid decline. Fewer people are identifying as “religious,” and even fewer are regularly attending church.

This might not come as a shock to many. In a time marked by unprecedented change, progress, and innovation, Christianity may seem irrelevant and outdated. What does the life of a man who walked the Earth 2,000 years ago matter for our world today?

We believe that Jesus matters infinitely, that although cultural Christianity may be in decline, Jesus Christ is alive and well. It’s this radical belief that leads us to a radical pursuit of truth in all things. For we believe that the news of Jesus’ death and resurrection is good, beautiful, and true for all areas of life.

We’re not afraid to ask the big questions, because we believe in a big God - a God who not only created the universe, but continues to sustain it.

What does it mean to be human? Should we follow our heads or our hearts? How can we truly alleviate human suffering? These are some of the discussions that fill this issue, covering topics ranging from artificial intelligence to social justice to corporate sales.

We’re not claiming to have all the answers, but we believe in a God who is the very truth that holds our universe together. So, regardless of your spiritual background, we welcome you on this journey with us.

May you find truth, hope, and love in our words. And may you encounter the person of Jesus, whose life, we believe, changes everything.

Sincerely,

Grace Liu
Editor-in-Chief

¹ <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>



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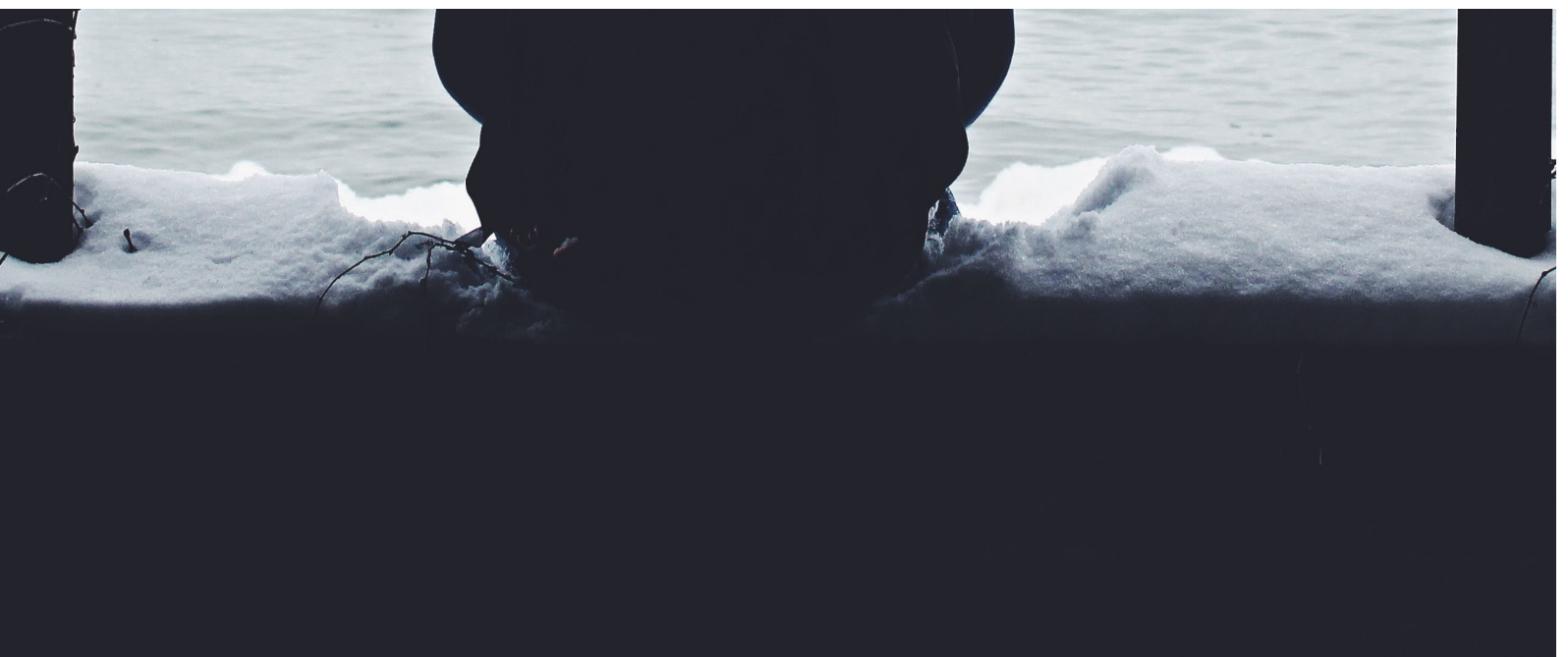
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Shifting Our Thoughts:

Lessons From Sufferers of OCD

by Mimi Cole



Our brains work daily to absorb and sort information, differentiating what is important from the clutter. On the daily, we are exposed to a plethora of both positive and negative input and media. For most people, the process of figuring out what is worth paying attention to is automatic and effortless. For others, however, and especially for those who have obsessive compulsive disorder, this process involves meticulously attaching meaning to thoughts. Some thoughts may be incongruent with their values, and they may start to question the implications of having these thoughts on their identity. These intrusive or obsessive thoughts are called egodystonic, because they are opposite to the person's values. We think things that are good and mean, and it can be scary, precisely because of how out of alignment these thoughts are to what we value and how we perceive ourselves.

Obsessive compulsive disorder is characterized by obsessions over thoughts and attacks on the values of the sufferer. The egodystonic, or values-opposing, nature of such thoughts is what makes the condition so debilitating. There are several different types of obsessive compulsive disorder, including sexual orientation OCD (a fixation on whether one is secretly a different sexual orientation than what they believed before), contamination OCD (a fixation on germs and fear of being contaminated), harm OCD (fear of harming others), and pedophilia OCD (fear of harming or abusing children). One particularly relevant form of OCD is called scrupulosity. Scrupulosity is characterized by religious-centered obsessions and compulsions, which may look like an intense fear of hell and of being unforgiven, or ritualistic prayer in hopes of getting it "just right." It is incredibly painful for those who suffer from it, because the thoughts generated by OCD are inherently opposite to the values of the affected individual.¹

OCD treatment to address egodystonic thoughts

The most effective treatment of obsessive compulsive disorder is called

1 Kastens, Alegra. (July 2019). If the obsessions aligned with your values, they would not scare you as much. Instagram.

exposure response prevention.²

These exposures involve individuals repeatedly encountering their fears and worries until they no longer display an anxious response. When exposed to the thoughts that scare them the most, individuals practice a different, neutral response, rather than the anxious response, in order to habituate to the stimulus. Although we may not all have OCD, we all experience egodystonic thoughts, and we can learn from the treatment and research surrounding obsessive compulsive disorder.

How do we know which thoughts to pay attention to? As Christians, how do we know which are from the Lord and which are just products of our living in this broken and fragile world? And how might knowing the Bible's words that God sees and cares about our thoughts influence our thinking on this subject?

The practice of mindfulness

The Bible calls us to guard our hearts and teaches us that our thoughts reflect the content of our hearts. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."³

What do we do with the seemingly contradictory information of obsessive compulsive disorder research and the claims of the Bible? How do individuals with obsessive compulsive disorder endure healing through treatment while also pursuing after the heart of the Lord?

First, there is a difference between dwelling on thoughts and accepting the presence of thoughts produced by our brains. Dr. Ted Witzig, a clinical psychologist and specialist in religious-focused scrupulosity, explains:

"There is a difference between the regular presence of thoughts and what Jesus talks about in this verse. We don't view temptation as the same thing as sin. Martin Luther famously said, 'You cannot keep birds from flying over your head but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.'"⁴

Mindfulness is the non-judgmental acceptance of the presence of thoughts and

2 ERP Therapy. (n.d.). Intrusive Thoughts. Retrieved from <https://www.intrusivethoughts.org/erp-therapy/>.

3 Matthew 5:27-28, NIV

4 Witzig, Ted. (2019, Sep. 5). Personal interview.

a continuous practice of returning to the truth of who we are. The thoughts themselves are not in alignment with what God desires but are part of living in a broken, imperfect world. Nathalie Maragoni, a Christian marriage and family therapist who specializes in OCD, writes:

"...with OCD, we must remember that there is a physical problem happening in the brain (in the amygdala), which triggers our body's 'Fight, flight, and freeze' response when there really is no danger. Recognizing that OCD consists of egodystonic, unwanted and intrusive thoughts that are completely out of the person's control is the key here. People who have OCD aren't choosing to have these thoughts."⁵

The work, then, is to notice and recognize the egodystonic nature of these thoughts as something that is contrary to what God wants for us, and then to let them pass instead of giving them power by entertaining them. Then, we can focus on the work of healing our relationship with ourselves and with the Lord - reassuring ourselves of the truth of our identity in Christ - which will in turn help us change our relationship with our thoughts.

Looking at the heart

How does this align with the Biblical commandment to dwell on what is good and to not think lustfully, etc.? The same word for looking is used 1 Samuel 16:7 of the Bible, which says, "People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." I think this has both specific and general implications. Specifically, it seems here that God is saying that he examines not the outside, but the heart. However, in this verse, the idea of looking seems to imply an examination into the deeper motives and beliefs.⁶

Maragoni offers valuable insight, explaining, "We can't control our thoughts, but simply having a thought that is a direct result of a malfunctioning brain is not a sin, but rather a result of... [living] in a broken world where any part of the body can get sick."⁷ Like

5 Maragoni, Nathalie. (2019, Sep. 2). Personal interview.

6 Blue Letter Bible.

7 Maragoni, Nathalie. (2019, Sep. 2). Personal interview.

mindfulness, we can practice a different response to these egodystonic thoughts, not giving them undue meaning and recognizing that they do not always tell us about who we actually are. Dr. Witzig says:

“If we tell ourselves not to think of something, our brain has to hold that thought in the front of the mind and keep comparing this to what we aren’t supposed to be thinking about. Alternatively, we can practice a model of ‘shifting towards’ thinking about what is pure, lovely, and good. The more we engross our minds on things that are in line with our values, the more the other things are going to dim in the background.”⁸

Shifting our attention

For situations when it is difficult to figure out if a thought comes from the Lord or if it is a product of the world that we live in, I propose several guidelines. First, we must remember that mental illness can distort the thoughts to which we can give excessive meaning. Thus, it is important to work with a certified therapist. Secondly, anxiety feels urgent and demanding, while “the inner voice of love”⁹ feels inviting and patient. We can look back to Biblical Scripture to affirm who we are and practice listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Egodystonic thoughts are not God’s intention for his people and come from living in a broken world. However, we can experience healing when we change our relationship to our thoughts and resist the urge to let them tell us who we are. Dr. Witzig comments:

“OCD is an affliction, and we see time and time again in the Bible that Jesus deals with the afflicted through compassion and understanding. God’s grace is always given to us in the present. But our minds tend to go to either the future-tripping (anxiety), or the past where we dredge (discouragement and shame).”¹⁰

Working to fight the presence of egodystonic thoughts requires us to continually shift our attention back to the present where God’s grace

is, to turn our thoughts to what is “right, pure, lovely, and admirable.”¹¹

“We can experience healing when we change our relationship to our thoughts and resist the urge to let them tell us who we are.”



Mimi Cole

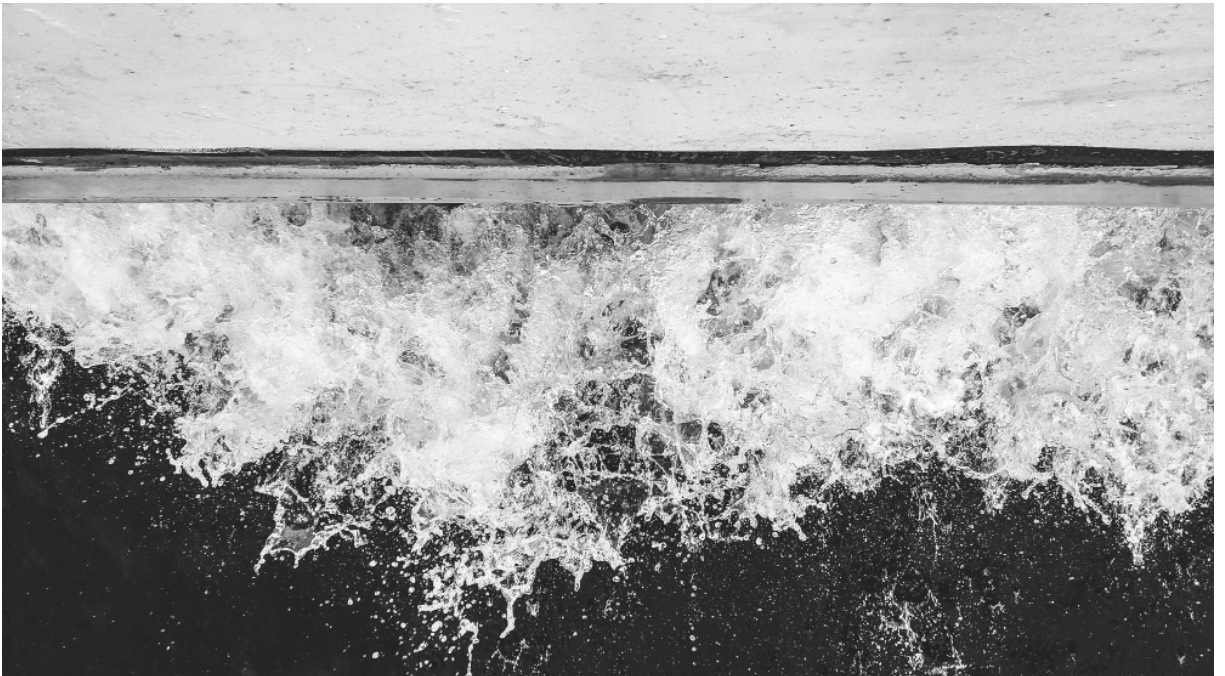
Mimi Cole is a senior double majoring in Child Development and Medicine, Health, and Society with a minor in Special Education. She is an aspiring mental health therapist, and is passionate about issues of disordered eating and anxiety disorders.

⁸ Witzig, Ted. (2019, Sep. 5). Personal interview.

⁹ Nouwen, H. J. M. (2014). *The inner voice of love: A journey through anguish to freedom*. London: Darton Longman & Todd.

¹⁰ Witzig, Ted. (2019, Sep. 5). Personal interview.

¹¹ Philippians 4:8



THE



FALSE DICHOTOMY

Social Justice & the Christian Gospel

by Grace Liu

Bill Gates once donated 100,000 chickens to Bolivia in an effort to alleviate extreme poverty.¹ According to Gates, he was investing in long-term economic development, helping families establish a sustainable source of income. Bolivia rejected the offer.² It viewed the effort as demeaning and unnecessary, highlighting that often what we think is best for others may not be what they want, or even what they need.

Social science research continues to find that complex social issues – issues of human rights, economic development, education – require far more than community service as a solution. New models of change involve innovative advocacy to affect public policy, collective impact and collaboration across sectors, and long-term impact investing and strategic philanthropy.

It follows from these models that organizations such as churches would have an integral role in community partnerships for change. If this is the case, churches must do much more than a seasonal food drive or Christmas offering. Unfortunately, this is often the limit of churches' involvement, drawing criticism for their ignorance, self-righteousness, and apathy.

How did we get here?

In 2012, Todd and Rufa conducted a study to investigate Christian congregational perspectives on and approaches toward social justice.³ Previous studies had found that white evangelical Christians thought highly individualistically, minimizing structural explanations of racism and emphasizing individualistic approaches to combating it. More theologically liberal congregations were found to be more engaged in social justice efforts, being more exposed to diversity and social norms within their congregations that encouraged this engagement.⁴ However, despite this perspective, all in-

1 Weller, Chris. (2016). Bill Gates says giving poor people chickens helps more than cash handouts. Business Insider. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/bill-gates-chickens-help-more-than-cash-handouts-2016-6>

2 Lee, Rhodi. (2016). Bolivia turns down chicken donation from Bill Gates: Here's why. Tech Times. Retrieved from <https://www.techtimes.com/articles/165700/20160619/bolivia-turns-down-chicken-donation-from-bill-gates-heres-why.htm>

3 Todd, N. R., & Rufa, A. K. (2013). Social justice and religious participation: A qualitative investigation of Christian perspectives. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 51(3-4), 315-331.

4 Smith, C., & Emerson, M. O. (2000). *Divided by faith: Evangelical religion and the problem of race in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.



interviewed participants of this study expressed difficulty engaging with social justice within their congregations due to obstacles such as leadership pushback and rejection of those deemed as having a “social justice agenda.”

In the early twentieth century, some American religious leaders addressed these issues with the introduction of the “social gospel.” This new theology viewed the Church as the “social factor in salvation,” and its supporters felt it was their responsibility to hasten the coming kingdom of God by applying Christian values to societal problems and meeting society’s needs.⁵ Then, in the 1960s came “liberation theology,” which interpreted Biblical Scripture through the plight of the oppressed.⁶ Defending the rights of these people, particularly by way of social activism and political liberation, was seen as central to the gospel doctrine.

These doctrines seem particularly appealing in our current climate and culture. “Social justice” as a movement and practice has evolved into its own sort of religion; we may not agree on absolute morality, but we must all believe in human rights, that racism and human trafficking and poverty are wrong and should be eliminated. When confronted with the fact that the Church itself has justified and even initiated oppressive and deplorable institutions such as slavery,⁷ it feels safer to say that church can be good, as long as it is for social justice, if it effects “good” social change. In this sense, social justice should be the Church’s ultimate aim.

Biblical justice

Interestingly, the Bible never uses the term “social justice.” American pastor and theologian Timothy Keller explains that the Biblical conception of justice, *mishpat* and *tzadeqah* in Hebrew, involves equitable treatment under the law, upholding human rights, and living out all relationships in fairness and

5 Zurlo, G. A. (2015). The social gospel, ecumenical movement, and Christian sociology: The institute of social and religious research. *The American Sociologist*, 46(2), 177-193.

6 Nesson, C. L. (2017). Liberation theologies in America. *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*. Retrieved from <http://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-493>

7 Shiflett, D., & Carroll, V. (2000). *Christianity on trial: Arguments against anti-religious bigotry*. San Francisco: Encounter Books.

equity.⁸ Considered collectively, these two Hebrew words may be interpreted to connote our modern conception of social justice. However *tzadeqah* refers primarily to God’s perfect, righteous justice and mankind’s relationship with a just God.

The danger of social gospel and liberation theologies is that they tend to elevate sociopolitical change above holistic, spiritual redemption, thus depreciating mankind’s spiritual need for a Savior and fundamentally misunderstanding the nature of the kingdom of God. The Christian worldview asserts that mankind’s primary need is not physical or sociopolitical, but spiritual. This is why the Church is called to evangelize and disciple, to proclaim and teach the good news of Jesus Christ with the hope of eternal salvation for all people.

Nonetheless, gospel proclamation need not be set against social care, for Biblical, spiritual redemption was never merely about individual or personal salvation, but about the establishment of a kingdom – both personal and cosmic.

Why should we care about human suffering?

It may seem obvious – we care because we empathize; to care is to be moral. But the Christian perspective offers a deeper understanding, motivation, and hope for change that is rooted not only in the dignity of the human, but in the nature of the Creator and in the future that He has promised.

“Biblical, spiritual redemption was never merely about individual or personal salvation, but about the establishment of a kingdom – both personal and cosmic.”

The Bible explains that Jesus died and resurrected not only to save each individual, but to usher in a new kingdom, to restore what has been broken: society, politics, ethics, and culture. The Christian understanding of this future kingdom is much more than a golden city of harps and angels, or even the absence of pain and suffering.

The Bible promises a kingdom with complete human flourishing, rooted in

8 Carter, J. (2018). The FAQs: What Christians should know about social justice. The Gospel Coalition. Retrieved from <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/faqs-christians-know-social-justice/>

the perfect union between and among God and people. Ultimately, human suffering in all of its forms and causes may be attributed to these broken relationships between and among God and people. The Biblical perspective affirms community psychology’s designation of complex social issues as “wicked problems” – problems such as poverty, hunger, and racism whose complexity, magnitude, and depth make them essentially impossible to eliminate.⁹ However, while community psychology and other fields of social science clarify that the term “wicked” does not refer to the morality of these issues but instead describes their resistance to resolution,¹⁰ the Biblical perspective goes further to assert that these problems and their complexity of causes are indeed evil. Community psychology says that we must look deeper and broader to address systemic issues; Christianity says we’re not looking deep enough. The Christian gospel declares that brokenness exists not only in the systems of people and their communities, but within the individuals themselves, and that it is this brokenness that manifests itself in the world. Human suffering is understood, then, as not only a mortal tragedy, but as a corruption of life created in the image of God and a personal affront to the perfectly good and just Creator.

The kingdom vision

Christianity asserts that Jesus sacrificed to reconcile all relationships and establish a coming kingdom of perfect

justice and peace, ruled by the One who is Himself perfect justice and peace.

With the future kingdom in mind, Christians cannot be satisfied with a “personal faith,” one that prioritizes individual moralism and good behavior. Furthermore, the solution is not to find a balance between internalized faith and

9 Bishop, B. J., & Dzidic, P. (2014). Dealing with wicked problems: Conducting a causal layered analysis of complex social psychological issues. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 53(1-2), 13-24.

10 Tackling wicked problems: A public policy perspective. (n.d.). Australian Public Service Commission. Retrieved from <https://www.apsc.gov.au/tackling-wicked-problems-public-policy-perspective>

outward works of social justice. It's not a balance to be pursued, but an understanding to be gained – an understanding of the gospel, of the mission of the Church, and of the coming kingdom of God. Without this understanding, I find that even our goals in social change fall far short of the flourishing promised in the kingdom of God. Are we hoping simply to reduce oppression and minimize harm? Or to empower impoverished and underprivileged communities? And what does this empowerment even look like?

“It’s not a balance to be pursued, but an understanding to be gained.”

I fear that we tend to equate success in social change with the “American Dream” – mere acquisition of material wealth or social agency. If this is our goal, we may be lulled into a false sense of security and accomplishment, setting our highest goals at providing Thanksgiving meals for 500 families or Christmas gifts for 1,000 children. These are good and necessary pursuits, and I believe the Bible does call Christians to express love in generosity, but both social science and a right understanding of the Kingdom of God remind us that this is not enough. We cannot and should not be satisfied with mere material provision.

Projects or people?

In recent years, social change agents have emphasized collaborative and participatory research and action, seeking first to understand and frame problems through collaboration with the target community members themselves.¹¹ Rather than attempting to solve problems with little firsthand experience of the issues and retaining power among those who often already hold it, this model gives agency to the community and encourages a culture of learning and respect among those outside of it. A foundation of empowerment also relies on relationship-building instead of service- or resource-providing. Professionals and others outside of the target community are seen as collaborators rather than experts, seeking to help identify existing strengths of the community and develop the necessary knowledge and

skills among its members.¹² Empowerment theory also emphasizes psychological empowerment, the combating of destructive cultural narratives among both the target and agent communities. Therefore, relationship-building across diverse communities is seen as crucial to social change.

A gospel-centered, kingdom-focused vision of change similarly values relationships. However, the Biblical perspective views relationships as not merely “social network development,” a means to an end, but as an end in itself. Intentional and ongoing relationships across diverse communities are not merely a means to upward mobility, but an end that Christians believe Christ died to make possible: reconciliation and unity among all people. This is Christ’s design for the Church, and it’s why Christianity affirms these models of collaboration and empowerment in social change – because people aren’t viewed projects to fix, as though we were God and able to do it. While we too easily define others by their history and circumstances, limiting our perspective of their potential, the Bible reveals a God who can resurrect the dead.¹³ With this God, there is limitless potential.

In their study, Todd and Rufa cautioned against individualism and proposed, as an approach to social justice, community: communities with mentoring, diverse exchanges, and effective leadership.¹⁴ Interestingly, their proposal seems to describe God’s design for the Church: “in Christ,... many [who] form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”¹⁵ Perhaps a strange idea in the context of our American individualism, I believe this idea of belonging encapsulates the need, perspective, and motivation for truly effective change. Social science emphasizes collaboration, empowerment, and community because it recognizes what the Christian gospel affirms: that human flourishing is measured not only by our ability to have and do what we want, but by our ability to

live well in relationship with each other.

Understanding to be gained

In this article, I’ve offered merely a framework for understanding social justice in the context of the kingdom of God, mostly because I’m still on a journey to discover what this will look like practically for my life, and because I don’t think the answer stops with just another technique for social change. It requires a deeper understanding of and care for the whole person, a pursuit of eternal belonging for all people, and an understanding of the belonging offered in God’s kingdom.

I wonder what it might look like to not only donate food and clothing for the homeless and impoverished, but to fight for affordable housing, innovatively combat food deserts, and work toward vocational training? What might it look like to not only volunteer at kids’ summer camps, but to address childhood trauma and abuse, engage in foster care and adoption, and support struggling parents? And what might it look like to not only donate to prison ministries, but to address adverse childhood experiences like abuse and neglect, fight for humane and restorative treatment of those in the system, and care for those affected by drug addiction?

This care is not a “social” gospel or a “liberal” theology; this is the nature of God, expressed in relationship through the Church. And the gospel is not good news because it offers security for the underprivileged; it’s good news because it offers hope for the poor in spirit, for all of mankind. It reminds us that our problems are worse than we think, but the future is better than we could ever imagine.

“The Biblical perspective views relationships as not merely “social network development,” a means to an end, but as an end in itself.”

12 Perkins, D. D., & Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Empowerment theory, research, and application. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 569-579.

13 Ephesians 2:5

14 Todd, N. R., & Rufa, A. K. (2013). Social justice and religious participation: A qualitative investigation of Christian perspectives. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 51(3-4), 315-331.

15 Romans 12:5

11 What is community psychology? (n.d.). *Community Psychology*. Retrieved from <https://www.communitypsychology.com/what-is-community-psychology/>

“The Biblical perspective views relationships as not merely ‘social network development,’ a means to an end, but as an end in itself.”



Grace Liu

Grace Liu is a junior majoring in Human & Organizational Development and Violin Performance. She hopes to pursue a career involving some combination of ministry, community development, music, and writing.



JASON THACKER

An Interview on Artificial Intelligence & Technology

Jason Thacker serves as the Creative Director and Associate Research Fellow at The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He is also a founding member of AI and Faith, a consortium of faith communities and academic institutions whose mission is to bring the world's major religions into discussion regarding the ethics of AI and related technologies. Thacker is the author of *The Age of AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity*, which will be released in March of 2020.

Synesis was privileged to speak with him.

To begin, how would you define “artificial intelligence?”

The simplest definition is “non-biological intelligence,” computers which exhibit certain intelligent behaviors like being able to process data or find connections that humans may otherwise miss. It's also important to distinguish between narrow AI and general AI, because most of the time, all we see in pop culture is general AI – killer robots, this kind of dystopian future. We're nowhere near that ability of AI, nor do we know if it's even possible to obtain a general level of intelligence. There's only one general level of intelligence in the universe, and it's us - the human level intelligence. Narrow AI is very specific to a task and narrow in its application, something like Siri on our phones. We use AI really every single day, but people don't often realize that the systems they're using or things they do are actually powered in large part by AI.

Why do you feel the need to address this topic and get Christians thinking about it?

First of all, it's already an issue we deal with everyday. There's a scientist named Ray Kurzweil who begins his book *How to Create a Mind* by saying that if all the AI systems became conscious and went on strike, our entire economy and society would instantly crash to a halt. Our society is already undergirded by it.

The reason why I want to speak into

this is that there's a lot of confusion, fear, and even apathy about what AI is and where we're heading. From a Christian perspective, we see that AI isn't really causing us to ask new questions of humanity, what we're able to do or where we're headed. Rather, it's causing us to ask the same old questions in light of new opportunities. We're starting to ask the fundamental questions of “What does it mean to be human?”, “Am I defined by my work?”, and “Are we able to create something better than ourselves?”

“From a Christian perspective, we see that AI isn't really causing us to ask new questions of humanity. Rather, it's causing us to ask the same old questions in light of new opportunities.”

As Christians, we believe that we have these deep longings because God has created us to know him and to love our neighbor. And that's the framework that I base my work on: Jesus' command to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Are we utilizing AI to love God and to love our neighbor, or are we using it to love ourselves and treat our neighbor as less than human?

You mentioned Ray Kurzweil. Part of his work has to do with the possibility of immortality and being able to download our minds into computers. What are your thoughts on this possibility?

None of those ultimate desires of overcoming brokenness and what we would call sin are unique to our technological age. That's what I meant by the return to fundamental questions. We know we live in a world that's not the way it's supposed to be, and we've always wanted to overcome poverty, sickness, brokenness, and death.

I think with such a powerful tool as AI at our fingertips and with the potential for even more power, there's a kind of dual tension: we can easily see ourselves as less than human while simultaneously seeing ourselves as greater than human, like a god. I'm not super worried about



this dystopian robot overlord takeover scenario. The thing I'm most concerned about is whether we see each other as less than human, whether we have a proper understanding of what it means to be created in the image of God and whether we recognize our limitations, because not all of our limitations are bad.

So do you think we can justify the idea of immortality or downloading our minds onto computers from a Christian perspective?

Well, I don't think that we're going to obtain a fully conscious computer, even if it can fool us into thinking that it's actually conscious. But I would take a step back and say that in order to rightfully understand AI, we need to rightfully understand who we are as creation in the image of God.

According to the Biblical Scriptures, humanity is distinct from the rest of creation because we were created in the likeness of God. The basis of the uniqueness and dignity of humans isn't based on what we do, how we think, or any kind of intrinsic part of ourselves. In my understanding of the image of God, we were created in God's likeness to represent him.

“The basis of the uniqueness and dignity of humans isn't based on what we do, how we think, or any kind of intrinsic part of ourselves.”

I think Kurzweil's ideas are very dangerous concepts for Christians to buy into, because the idea of downloading our minds assumes that the body isn't worth anything, that it's just a vessel or container. Wanting to just update our containers for something that will last longer is a devaluing of the body, an assumption that the body is less important than the mind. I believe that Christ is in a physical, risen body. He didn't rise from the dead as a spirit or a soul; he rose from the dead as a live man with holes in his hands and a cut in his side. So this idea that our body is less valuable than our minds is contradictory to Christianity and something the Christian tradition rejected from the early centuries of the Church.

Furthermore, from the Christian understanding, we are already immortal. We are immortal souls who will be either eternally with God or eternally separated from him.

How would you respond to someone who justifies superhuman modifications with the argument that they're simply pursuing the eradication of sickness, poverty, and other suffering? At the same time, how can Christians harness these technologies for greater human flourishing?

The idea of upgrading our bodies is not a new idea; it's called transhumanism. In many ways, there could be good restorative applications of these technologies. My father is an amputee, and it would be a good advance if he could have a leg that's functional. But then we get to really fine-tuned ethical questions, like "At what point is he not a human anymore?" and "Is he really just a machine if he has all these upgraded pieces?" Again, we reach that question of "What does it mean to be human?" It's this fundamental question that we have to answer, and once we have that, I think we can rightly pursue restorative means of medical applications in technology.

The idea that we need to be upgraded and that we're not good enough, though, runs contrary to what the Biblical Scriptures teach about the uniqueness of man made in the image of God.

We should be pursuing innovation, because God's given us this tool and ability to create. The guarded, fearful idea that we should stifle all innovation is not very Christian. We just need to approach it with wisdom. This is why I think society as a whole is starting to have conversa-

tions about ethics. As a Christian, I would argue that the ethic of human dignity comes from the image of God, and others would base that in other faith traditions or understandings of society. Ultimately, though, the wise approach comes from prizing and valuing humanity as distinct and unique and pursuing innovation for the sake of human flourishing.

"The wise approach comes from prizing and valuing humanity as distinct and unique and pursuing innovation for the sake of human flourishing."

If biological enhancements became the new norm in the next twenty to thirty years, would you refuse them?

First of all, I wouldn't say I would refuse them now because we're not there yet, and I don't want to speak too early. There are a lot of theories about what we could do, like using nanotechnology to cure cancer. And that sounds awesome. My mother had lung cancer.

It's when you turn the use of technology from pursuing human flourishing to being a means in itself or being a means to dehumanization — that's where I would have more issues with it. In twenty or thirty years, we will still be created in the image of God. We will still be unique. And that doesn't just apply to the people we think are useful. It also applies to the people who don't have any perceived value to society. I personally believe it applies to both the baby in the womb and my 94 year-old grandmother as she lay dying in her bed, squeezing my hand for the last time. My grandmother had more value in that moment than any technological creation that will be created. Why? It's not her usefulness. It's not the baby's potential for usefulness or the elderly's past usefulness. It all comes down to being created in the image of God.

So I think rightfully understanding what technology is, who God is, and who we are is the key to a good ethic and moral basis moving forward.

How do you see AI impacting the future of work in our society?

I believe we're facing a kind of turning point in the history of work, where the fundamental nature of work is going to shift. What we need to say as Christians is that our work doesn't define us. What happens if we make our work our identi-

ty? If we lose our job, we lose our identity. We start to view each other based solely on utilitarian means, so your dignity and value to society is based on what you can contribute. But that's completely contradictory to Christianity. I think that as Christians, we need to uphold the dignity and value of work as a way of upholding the dignity and value of each human being created in the image of God.

What advice would you give to people wanting to enter the field of technology?

First of all, I'd say "praise God." The idea of doing ministry isn't relegated just to vocational ministry or thinkers and writers. We need Christian programmers and computer scientists and doctors and lawyers, representing God and the gifts and talents he's given us.

I think the advice I would give to Christians is that our faith isn't something we leave at the doorstep when we go into the office. Our faith is integral to who we are because it's fundamentally shifted and changed us. So it's important to represent the Lord in our work, keeping central the framework of loving God and loving others. Having the aim of human flourishing and human dignity is also crucial to that.

The biggest thing I would say though is to just have conversations and be open about our faith. I know a number of Christians in big tech who are doing faithful and great work, and they're leading their teams by saying that they value human dignity. We can be faithful to God as we do the work that he's called us to do.

If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?

Someone asked me a couple weeks ago what my favorite AI-related TV show or movie is, and I told him that there are actually two books: Frankenstein and Fantasia. Mickey and the broom actually has something to do with superhuman killer robots and the future of technology. But in terms of superpowers, I still think flying would be pretty rad, to be able to travel really quickly and have that kind of perspective. My specific little annoyance or frustration in the moment kind of loses its power when I see the grandeur of what God has created. It's just not something you see every day.

Interview by Grace Liu and Isaiah Salazar

“Spiritual, but not Religious”

by Molly Wells

Is there a god? Do humans have souls? Is there more to life than just the physical?

These are the types of questions that anyone, no matter one’s religious affiliation, often ponders. Even those who are antagonistic towards religion are usually willing to discuss matters of the spirit or soul. This is because metaphysical ideas are not usually considered inherently religious topics. They could, however, fall under the category dubbed “spiritual.” This distinction between spiritual and religious is often what people will point to when they do not want to associate with organized religion. In fact, people often reject Christianity, in particular, in an effort to avoid religion, while still wanting to remain “spiritual.” These actions stem from the presupposition that spirituality is based on love, unity, and freedom, while religion is grounded in fear, separation, and dictation. I would argue, however, that the Christian religion is in fact intertwined with spirituality and finds its foundation in love.

Defining religion

The vast variety in religions make religion itself very difficult to define. Buddhism, for example, is a religion that often challenges our assumptions about the nature of religion. According to research institutions like the Pew Research Center, it is one of the world’s greatest organized religions.¹ However, it often

1 Hackett, C. and McClendon, D. (2017, April 5). Christians remain world’s largest religious group, but they are declining in Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but->

appeals to the “spiritual but not religious,” because there are no traditional Buddhist gods (gods as we think of them in the West), nor is there one way to practice Buddhism. Most religions, however, operate like Buddhism in this way; there is not one way to do any religion. The assumption that all practitioners in a religion act the same way or believe the same things is one of the myths that prevents people from experiencing the goodness of religion.

Many people think that belief in a god is fundamental to religion. In fact, the New Oxford American Dictionary defines religion as “the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.”² Prominent religious studies scholars, however, counter that religion can in fact be defined differently. American historian Jonathan Z. Smith writes, “‘Religion’ is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define.”³

Given this, it is unreasonable to assume that all religion must include the belief in a god. Thus, I would define religion rather broadly as a set of beliefs that one holds about the origin and purpose of one’s existence.

Foundation of love

The Spirit Science, a site which strives to engage people in issues of spirituality

[they-are-declining-in-europe/](http://thespiritscience.net).

2 New Oxford American dictionary (3rd e.d.). (2015). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

3 Smith, J.Z. (1998). Religion, religions, religious. In M.C. Taylor (Ed.) *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

and mindfulness, lists several differences between spirituality and religion. One reads, “Spirituality is based only on love and not fear.”⁴ This assumption that religion is inherently tied to fear, however, is antithetical to the Christian doctrine. The very foundation of Christianity – the gospel of Jesus Christ – is rooted in love. The Bible reads, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”⁵ Although some churches have twisted Scripture to control their congregations through fear, the Biblical Christian doctrine is that God sent his Son out of *love* for our redemption and salvation.

On the other hand, fear can in fact be a good and useful thing. *The Spirit Science* states that “any choice made out of fear is not good for your soul.” However, it is usually fear that protects us from crazy, life-threatening activities such as disobeying traffic laws or placing our hand over an open flame. We instinctively fear pain, and this is a good thing. Fear helps us rationalize and make decisions. To enjoy life (and God) to the fullest, I would argue one needs both a mixture of fear and love.

Unifying nature

Many often point out the unifying tendency of spirituality and contrast it with the separating tendency of reli-

4 Khan, K. (2015, June 7). 6 Fundamental differences between religion and spirituality.

Retrieved from <http://thespiritscience.net/2015/06/07/6-fundamental-differences-between-religion-spirituality/>

5 John 3:16, New International Version



gion. The argument follows that because so many different religions all claim to be true, conflict and division ensue. *The Spirit Science* asserts that spirituality is unique in its ability to perceive the truth in every religion, therefore leading to greater unity. This argument assumes that only the “spiritual” know what is true and that the “religious” are blinded by their belief in absolute truth. However, this assumption seems to demonstrate the very intolerance that the “spiritual” attempt to avoid. Exclusive truth claims are unavoidable. Thus, what we need is not the absence of absolute truth, but an absolute truth that humbles and unifies. I believe we find this truth in the Christian religion. While Christianity may have many denominations, its followers are united under a central figure — Jesus Christ — and a central belief — that Jesus, the Son of God, humbled himself to redeem us and welcome us into his kingdom of perfect unity, even while we were still sinners.⁶ Rather than dividing, this belief should motivate us to the same humility and pursuit of unity.

6 Romans 8:5, New International Version

“Rather than dividing, this belief should motivate us to the same humility and pursuit of unity.”

Origin of Truth

Another difference between spirituality and religion listed on *The Spirit Science* is this: “religion tells you the truth, while spirituality lets you discover it.” Spirituality is often believed to encourage the discovery of one’s identity and purpose in life, while religion is assumed to dictate it.⁷ However, this distinction between personal discovery and instruction reveals a negative perception of authority.

The incorrect assumption is that all religious authorities will lead their followers or congregation in a series of lies, rather than truth. Truth, by this line of thinking, must be discovered inherently in each individual — to escape the restric-

7 Braddock, S. Spirituality vs. religion, which is best for you? Retrieved from <https://metiza.com/self-love/spirituality-vs-religion/>

tions imposed by authority. Our society, however, is set up in such a way that having no outside influence on an individual’s beliefs is impossible. Therefore, authority is inevitable and not always bad (authority helps establish beneficial institutions such as language and systems of education). That being said, Christianity does not advocate for *dictatorial* authority figures. There is an element of discovery that is important when considering whether anything is true, even within Christianity.

The discovery of truth requires both faith and reason, as does any type of belief, whether “spiritual” or “religious.”⁸ Even if one “discovers” a truth, faith must have been used at some point to get to that conclusion. On the other hand, reason is also involved in any decision to accept something as true. For example, if someone tells me that they had coffee this morning, I believe them, because according to my sense of logic, they have no reason to lie to me. However, I did not see them drink coffee, so I use faith

8 Tilley, T. (2010). *Faith: What it is and what it isn't*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

to trust that they are telling me the truth. This is a very simple example of a concept that gets rather complex, especially when considering the varying thoughts on what is considered logically possible. Despite the complex nature of this topic, I argue that one needs self-discovery as well as authority to determine truth. Both faith and reason are required in the processes of self-discovery and accepting authority.

Spirituality of the Christian religion

At its core, the Christian religion seeks to touch the individual – it is a profound process which transforms the soul. In this way, it is deeply spiritual.

It is based in love while respecting the purpose of fear. It seeks to unite while celebrating diversity. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of the collective whole as well as the individual. At the core, Christianity is a religion through which Christians enter a spiritual process. The Christian belief of salvation rests upon sanctification by the Spirit. I believe we are not saved by our own volition. It is the work of the Holy Spirit (and therefore God) to adopt our souls. The human desire to be “spiritual,” I would argue, is evidence of our longing to be in communion with God.

While it is not ultimately up to us to save ourselves, it is the aim of the Christian to grow in the fruits of the Spirit as laid out in Galatians 5:22-23 of the Bible: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. These virtues are valued not only by Christians, but also by those who consider themselves to be “spiritual.”

It is simply not possible to be wholly religiously Christian without also being spiritual. While I will concede that it is possible to detach some spiritual aspects from religion (i.e. consider oneself spiritual but not religious), I do think that those spiritual aspects, at their origins, stem from religion. Thus, religion and spirituality are quite intertwined. Christianity is a fundamentally spiritual form of organized religion.

“At its core, the Christian religion seeks to touch the individual – it is a profound process which transforms the soul.”



Molly Wells

Molly Wells is a junior majoring in Religious Studies and German Studies. She doesn't yet know what her long-term career plans are, but enjoys writing about and discussing life's biggest questions.

by Keaton Scherpereel

LOGIC VS. EMOTION?

You find yourself in command of the USS Enterprise from *Star Trek* in the midst of dire circumstances. Captain Kirk has been trapped outside the ship, the ship has limited power, and hostile enemies are attacking. Two competing voices are recommending different alternatives: Spock, the voice of reason, advises following logic by fighting the enemy to maintain your position. McCoy, the voice of emotion, urges retreat in order to protect the crew.¹ The question burns itself in your mind, “How do I decide between reason and emotion, Spock or McCoy? Does one preside over the other or are the two locked in battle, with one only gaining the upper hand for a brief second?”

This question isn’t limited to the realm of science fiction but is intrinsically involved in everyday decision making. Culture sends conflicting messages, from “listen to your heart” to “think before you act.” Even on campus, we are caught between classes that call for logic-driven, fact-based solutions and those that encourage us to push beyond logic through expressive, heart-felt appeals. How should

1 Marc Daniels, M. C. (Director). (1969). “The Tholian Web” *Star Trek Original* [Motion Picture]. CBS.

we navigate this question in order to live a good, flourishing life?

There are two main sides in this debate: Spock’s position that reason is the most important part of living a good life, and McCoy’s position that emotion is primary. To understand each side of the argument and the effects they have had on culture, let me allow some philosophers to make the case for their position.

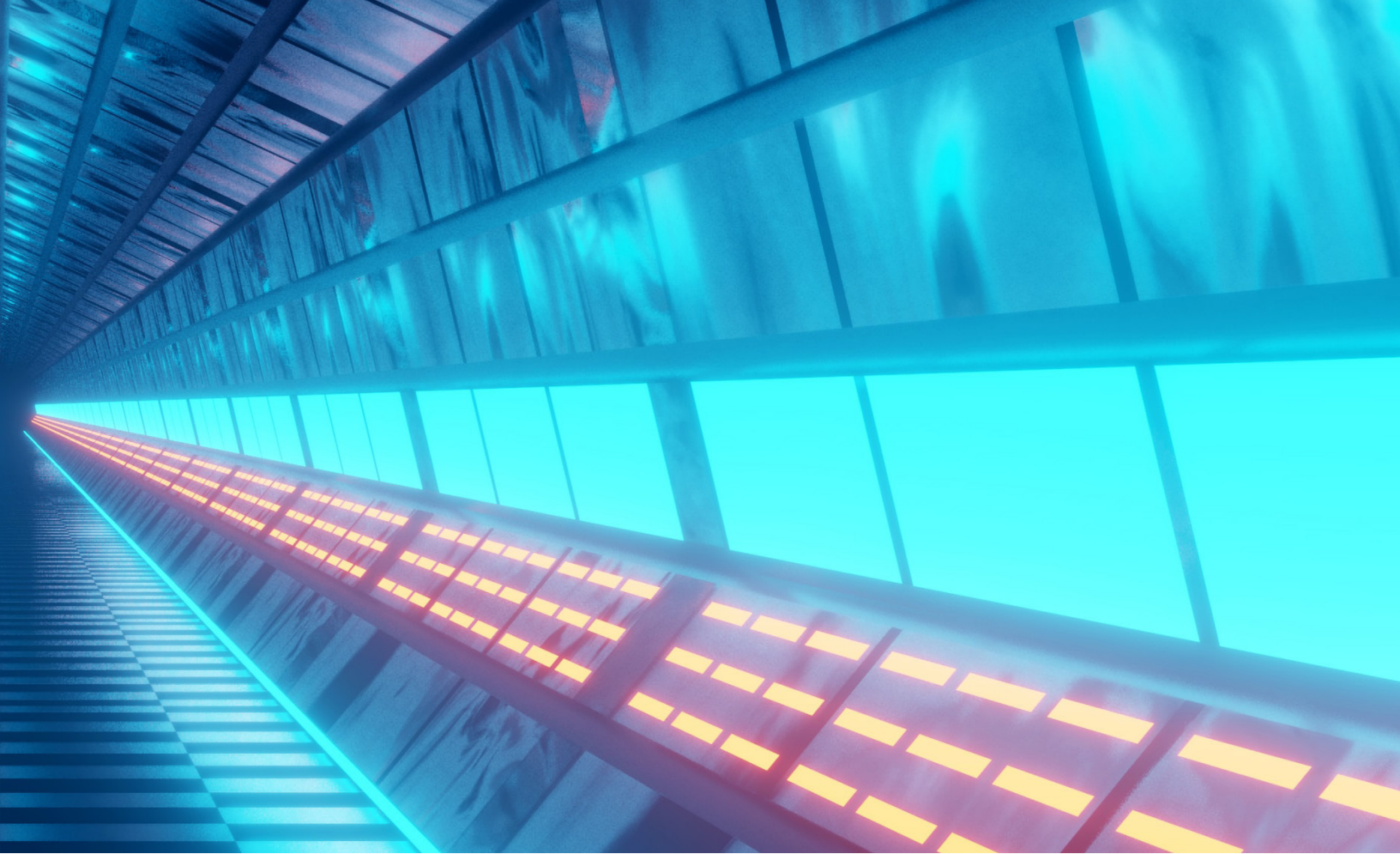
Spock’s life of logic

The Spockian side of the debate has roots in the Stoics view of the good life. In their view, the good life is ataraxia or tranquility, a state of being unperturbed by the world around them. For the Stoics, the way to be happy is to maintain tranquility by cultivating reason directed toward virtue. One Stoic, Seneca, states, “the happy life depends upon this and this alone: our attainment of perfect reason,”² as reason can guide us through misfortune by controlling our reaction to those difficulties. However, not only do the Stoics emphasize reason as one important trait, but they also present it as the important trait. Epictetus, another Stoic, states, “Socra-

2 Seneca, L. A. (2017, April 27). *On the Happy Life*. Retrieved November 12, 2018, from Aeon.

tes became fully perfect... by not paying attention to anything but his reason in everything that he met with.”³ Epictetus asserts that desire should be eliminated, “since if you desire something that is not up to us, you are bound to be unfortunate...” In this view this view, reason and emotion take on the roles of ruler and subject respectively; reason rules the body, while desires and emotions are completely subject to its rule.

This view is not limited to these ancient philosophers but still affects society and especially academia today. Vern Poitress, in his book *Logic*, states, “In almost every sphere, universities today rely on reasoning—in natural sciences, medicine, historical studies, law, economics, political science, language study, literary analysis, mathematics. Academic work aspires to conduct its reasoning rigorously. And logic is a model for rigor.”⁴ Even beyond the academic sphere, it is logic that keeps us from making grave mistakes and helps us to correctly predict the results of our actions before we make them. We rely on logic for even the most basic reasoning, such as, “High-speed trains kill wayward bicyclists, and I am a bicyclist with a knack for getting off track, therefore I may be killed by a high-speed



train.” There seems to be nothing in this world that the hand of Spock’s logic does not touch; we cannot even conceive of a reality in which logic does not operate.

McCoy’s life of emotion

The second side of the debate, as exemplified by McCoy, has a compelling historical representative in Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau presents an alternate definition of happiness: the balance of desires and the power to attain those desires. This means that if our desire for something exceeds our ability to obtain it, we will be unhappy. On the other hand, if our desire is far beneath our abilities, we will leave a portion of ourselves underutilized and idle, which would also prevent us from being happy in our whole being. Rousseau believes that happiness is achieved by relying on the primitive nature. Because the mind is what awakens desire and allows power and will to become unbalanced, we must look instead to our natural emotion, which informs morality and determines good desire. Rousseau states, “To exist is to feel; our feeling is undoubtedly earlier than our intelligence, and we had feelings before we had ideas.”⁵ Thus, I would char-

5 Rousseau, J.-J. (1999). *Emile*. In C. Guignon, *The Good*

acterize this view of logic and emotion as one of foundation and superstructure; the emotions form the foundation upon which reason resides.

Again, this view has far reaching effects on our culture. Whether explicitly stated in songs like the Beatles’ “All You Need is Love”⁶ or hidden in the magic of Disney’s princess movies, the message bleeds through: we need to be true to ourselves and authentic to what we feel. This affects not only art and philosophy but also our value systems. We value those things that have the most emotional significance. As Helen Keller posits, “The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.”⁷ Emotion also allows us to connect with people around us, not just around us, not just respond to external stimuli. As Rousseau would say, “Apart from the [conscience, instinct], I find nothing in myself to raise me above the beasts – nothing but the sad

Life (pp. 204-210). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

6 McCartney, P., & Lennon, J. (1967). *All You Need Is Love* [Vinyl record]. Los Angeles: Capitol Records.

7 Shaler, S. P. (1921). *The Masters of Fate: The Power of the Will*. New York: Duffield and Company.

privilege of wandering from one error to another, by the help of an unbridled understanding and a reason which knows no principle.” Without using McCoy’s emotion in understanding a situation, logic would have no foundation upon which to rest.

Examining the extremes

First, let us examine Spock’s logic. Can one be completely reasonable without emotion? Consider this scenario: Elliot is diagnosed with a brain tumor, and after a successful surgery, he seems to have fully recovered, scoring highly on IQ tests and doing well on psychological tests. However, his life soon begins to fall apart because of his poor decision-making. It is discovered that his amygdala, a part of the brain associated with emotion, is damaged. Thus, he no longer has feelings.⁸ Elliot can reason his way to many possibilities, but he cannot decide on one due to his lack of emotion. This situation resembles Aristotle’s thought experiment, in which a reasonable man is placed equidistant between food and water with an equal desire for each, but dies

8 Damasio, A. R. (1994). *Descartes’ Error: Reason, Emotion and the Human Brain*. New York: Grosset/Putnam Berkley Group, Inc.

of indecision because there is no logically optimal option.⁹ These scenarios demonstrate that reason without emotion cannot be the answer to the good life.

The psychology case of Phineas Gage also demonstrates the extreme of emotion. Gage was a kind and temperate man who suffered a tragic brain injury to his prefrontal cortex, the portion of the brain associated with reasoning. Although he was physically healed, his personality changed significantly and he “had the animal passions of a strong man.” Possessing the emotions of a man with the reason of a child ended up costing Gage his work and friends; his intuition alone could not lead to a good life, revealing that emotion without reason cannot lead to happiness.

These two presentations seem diametrically opposed, but it is our attempt to separate and oppose them which creates this perceived paradox. Instead, reason and emotion must somehow work together, interdependently.

How should we handle this apparent paradox?

We may attempt to balance the two, maintaining both with a recognition of the failings of either, but this would not solve our introductory dilemma of deciding between them when they conflict. I will endeavor to show that there is indeed a connection between the two that can explain this apparent paradox and then address the question addressed in the introduction.

To that end, let me lay out some of the requirements implicit in each side of the debate and then see what brings these two ideas together. First, we examine logic. The laws of logic are at their very core truth claims; they make conclusive statements about what is possible and what is not, what is a valid argument and what isn't. For example, the law of non-contradiction says that if I am in class, I cannot simultaneously be out of class. Also, logic must hold for all space and all time; the validity of the proposition about class can't change if I move to Sweden or go back to the middle ages. The laws of logic cannot be physically seen but are evidenced in the world by their effects. All of these attributes (truthful, eternal, immutable, invisible, and imma-

“These two presentations seem diametrically opposed, but it is our attempt to separate and oppose them which creates this perceived paradox.”

terial) highlight that logic is a reflection of self-consistency. But to turn to the emotive side, logic is an expression of rationality which is an inherently personal attribute; a world without persons would not have rationality. Also, without the motivations of love and hope, logic would have no object to accomplish besides the useless proliferation of facts.

A similar argument can be made for emotion. Emotion is connected to belief and is therefore propositional.¹⁰ For example, a person can be sad that it is raining only if they believe that it is indeed raining. Also, emotions can be intentional, meaning that they are directed at an object, whether a person – “I am angry at my roommate” – or a thing – “I am excited about finals being finished.” These directly relate to the propositional nature of logic. Without the self-consistency of logic, emotions such as love and compassion could not be acted upon, because we could make no inference about the actions necessary for expressing those emotions. Similar to logic, we again see the requirement that emotion is personal.

These reflections reveal that logic and emotion do necessitate each other; logic relies on the motivation and direction of emotion while emotion relies on the self-consistency of logic. But even more fundamentally, each is rooted in personhood, requiring a concept of personhood in order to exist.

“Even more fundamentally, each is rooted in personhood, requiring a concept of personhood in order to exist.”

If the nature of these two faculties and the combination of the two is to be justified, their existence and function must be rooted in a person, not just an ideal. I contend that all of these attributes can only be found in a robust view of

the Christian trinitarian God. If logic must be personal, truthful, eternal, immutable, invisible, and immaterial, as we saw above, then the basis and originator of logic must also possess those attributes. If emotion must be personal and have the capacity for love and compassion, then the justification for the existence of any emotion must also possess those attributes. If love exists and God is eternal, then the only way that love can exist in God is for him to be able to love within himself. Since love always requires an object, the only way that this kind of love can exist is in a trinitarian God, a God whose very nature can explain the unity and diversity we see in the world. Without a trinitarian God, there would be no basis for a God that can be both transcendent and immanent, powerful enough to be the foundation of all truth claims and yet loving enough to express emotion by being present with us in our everyday lives and having a relationship with us.

But in a world of order and consistency, is this amalgamation of two seemingly paradoxical ideas some strange anomaly? Is there any beauty or elegance in this answer? Within Christianity, this is no surprise. As G.K. Chesterton presents in *Orthodoxy*, it is this very fact that allows Christianity to explain the complexity of the world around us. He states:

“We want not an amalgam or compromise, but both things at the top of their energy... I need not remind the reader that the idea of this combination [of paradoxical ideas] is indeed central in orthodox theology. For orthodox theology has specially insisted that Christ was not a being apart from God and man, like an elf, nor yet a being half human and half not, like a centaur, but both things at once and both things thoroughly, very man and very God.”¹¹

⁹ Aristotle. (1999). *Nicomachean Ethics*. In C. Guignon, *The Good Life* (pp. 22-41). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

¹⁰ Price, A. W. (2018). *Emotions in Plato and Aristotle*. In P. Goldie, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (pp. 1-24). New York: Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Chesterton, G. K. (1908). *Orthodoxy*. New York: John Lane Company.

Chesterton goes on to explain how virtues such as courage, modesty, and charity are all in their essence paradoxical. Christianity explains how we can love the martyr and hate suicide. These paradoxes exist all around us – truth and grace, justice and mercy, human responsibility and God’s sovereignty, logic and emotion.

The rule of truth

The skeptic may respond that this sounds ideal in a purely abstract realm, but how can this function practically, especially when the two seem to conflict? I agree that there are situations in which these two faculties appear to lead us in opposite directions. However, I maintain that one faculty is not subservient to the other, but instead both are subservient to something higher: truth. If something higher than both of these faculties is guiding their function, then, when faced with these obstacles, we need only follow the one that aligns most closely with truth.

“If something higher than both of these faculties is guiding their function, then, when faced with these obstacles, we need only follow the one that aligns most closely with truth.”

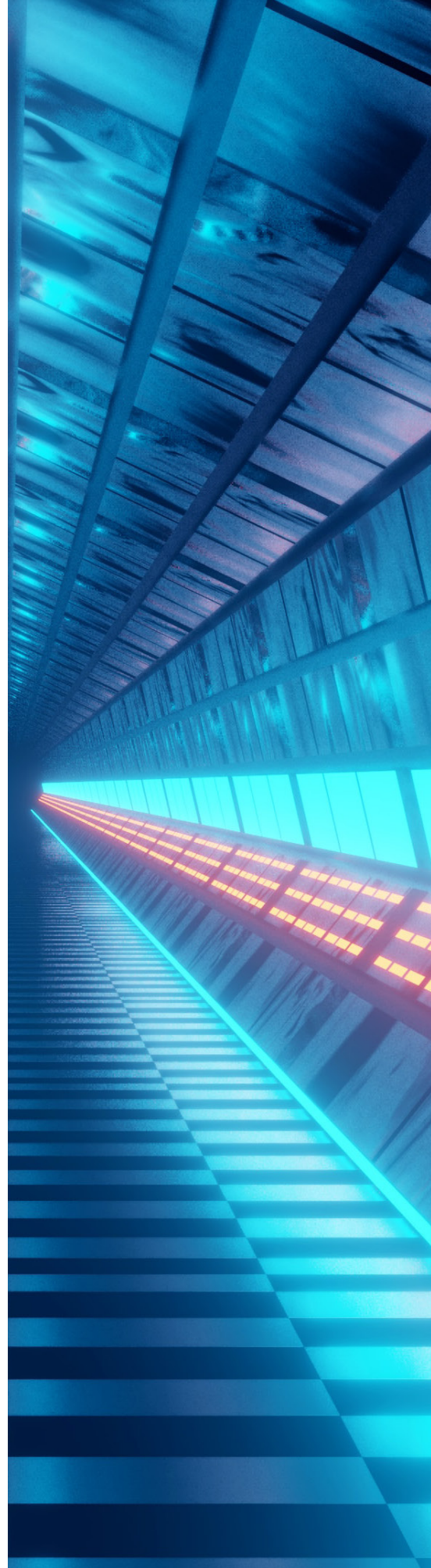
Human emotion may feel that I deserve an A on my exam, but logic says that since I incorrectly answered all the questions, that feeling is not leading me to truth. Logic may say that I should spend all my time pursuing academic success, yet emotion shows that personal interactions and friendships are a necessary part of life. In these situations, true reason and emotion are not actually in contradiction, but our perception is instead skewed by a finite knowledge of facts.

Though the struggle between Spock and McCoy is real in the sense that there are situations in which logic and emotion drag us in opposite directions, we must hold these two faculties in tension. Placing reason as paramount to emotion cannot promise a good life and neither can placing emotion before reason. These two faculties must be held equally together and require each other. This tension can only find its resolution in a robust trinitarian perspective of God, and the nature of both logic and emotion point to this perspective. Through this lens, we see that the forces of culture may push us to one extreme or the other, but if each finds its place under the rule of truth, Spock and McCoy can come to a consensus. As Captain Kirk’s advice to Spock in the episode indicates, it is not just a balance of both faculties, but a full use of emotion and logic that can lead the USS Enterprise out of danger. As Kirk states, “Use every scrap of knowledge and logic you have to save the ship, but temper your judgment with intuitive insight... Seek out McCoy, ask his advice.”¹ Logic and emotion need not be an explosive mixture but instead when held together in tension, they can weave a harmonious melody.



Keaton Scherpereel

Keaton Scherpereel is a '19 alumnus and current Robotics PhD student at Georgia Tech. His research focuses on the control of human exoskeletons, specifically studying how joint sounds can be used in exoskeleton control. Outside of research, he enjoys playing instruments, hiking, reading exciting books (or not so exciting depending on your perspective), and playing ultimate frisbee.



Does My God

F O R

It was one of those nights, a pendulum that dangles a bit at the precipice of each climax: might slip, might not. There was a familiar staleness in the air, the type that would swaddle up any cries or shrieks in a clammy silence, but would tease any insecurities with relentless whisperings.

I sat on a couch facing a blank television, arm resting on a melted stack of books spilled across my lap, eyes pinned to a small chunk of shadow, one of the indistinguishable thousands in the room. I stared a bit longer. It's insignificant. One more insignificance in a day stuffed full of them, a slice of a two-week pie of inconsequentialism. The food I made and ate? Gone. The cleaned room I was settling into? See above. The article I was writing? A single, blinking, black line, on a slate of white expanse.

Among all the flavors of the human experience, loneliness brings with it a certain blandness. Sometimes it's the damp nausea; sometimes it's the muted ticking of the clock; sometimes it's forgetting how to move your tongue to produce words.

I sometimes wonder what those three days felt like. Nobody else has ever known what it feels like to die, but I'm positive that whatever discomfort or pain Death brought Christ, it was nothing compared to the separation that came with it. When Christ asked, "Why?", he wasn't just asking a question. For the first time, he was asking a question to his Father he once knew.

He had lived in perfect relationship with God, so much that they were one and the same, for his entire existence. He knew God better than anyone has ever known another human being. They lived and loved in a perfect unity no human mind could ever imagine, in absolute peace and harmony and joy.

But – the light had to fade. For a split second, the flame had to sputter out.

I bet it hurt like hell.



s a k e ?

Sometimes, it's too much to open my Bible. It's a small, well-worn gray book; yet, in my eyes, the cover carries the weight of lead. I know that if I open it, and drag my eyes slowly across the page, running over every bump of every letter, those words will become meaning and that meaning will become the comforting voice of God.

Or my own voice.

Doubt slips in at this instance, spurious yet just ambiguous enough to avoid destruction. It shoots through my veins and pauses my fingers on the cover of the book, daring me to open it and see for myself whether I can still believe.

I'm not brave enough, and so I sit there, Bible in hand, voice in head, heart in gloom. This is where the numbing stasis sets in, and I pray desperately – desperately, but only in my mind, with lips tight, head upright – that somehow God's grace will surpass the book's covers and slip out from the pages and into my body of crumbling chaffe.

This acute loneliness isn't described about most people in the Bible. After all, they're famous for actions that impacted people and changed the course of history, not for the stifling silence of doing nothing to nobody.

Still, I wonder what feelings lurk between the lines of the closed book in my lap. Did Moses, coming down the mountain where he experienced the presence of the Lord, know that human relationships would never have the same glow? Did Abraham know that, though his son Isaac stayed alive and his faith remained, everytime he looked at his son, it would be through a tint of crimson? Did David know that he traded the solitude of caves for that of kingdoms? Did Paul know if anyone would respond to his letters? Do the missionaries know their spilt blood

might water plants they will never see bloom?

Does a taste of God incur loneliness?

"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?"¹

The words are foreign; they don't make sense. And yet, the syllables that crash in dissonance, in disjointed vowels and tense consonants, the repetition – they tease at something powerful.

What is it that the Christ, a King triumphant, a Son glorified, cries out before he completes his mission on Earth? Is it a declaration of victory over the inescapable snare of sin? A joyous farewell to the world that has despised, mocked, and killed him, as he leaves it once and for all? Where are the angels descending from the clouds, blowing their trumpets, spilling light over the Son of God Himself?

"My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me."

It's not a question. Christ knew the divine purposes – hell, even we know. Our struggles and suffering – when the joy and providence of God seems to leave our lives – there's a part of us that knows it results in good. We know that God uses all things for his glory, that the fire purifies and the sting cleanses; the curse redeems and the death restores. Because there is nothing on this Earth that isn't more than a temporary affliction, a momentary trouble on the path towards eternal bliss, and truly, truly, that's all that matters in the end.

But it hurts to be forsaken. It hurts to be lost. It hurts to be torn from Love's cradle, tossed out into the storm alone to die.

I don't know if Jesus knew that beforehand. Maybe that's why he had to feel it.

Like the scalpel that finally removes the thorn, loneliness is pushed to the side by the joyous and exhausting chaos of human relationship. Swept aside are most of the pains and questions of solitude.

"I don't know if Jesus knew that beforehand. Maybe that's why he had to feel it."

Leaving just the slightly discolored stains:

*Does my God forsake?
Will He forsake again?
Why did He?*

He says he won't. He promised he won't. I know he won't.

I don't always feel it, though.



Yuhang Zhang

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¹ Mark 15:34



THE CORPORATE

We the Client

Many think Christianity can be reduced to a set of rules – rules which must always be followed. They think about it legalistically. Why not? Every religion of this world operates in this way. The concept is this: “Follow this set of guidelines to perfection and you will reach fulfillment.” In order to end suffering, perfect each one of these points on the Eightfold Path. Pray five times a day. Do not covet. Go to this networking event. Do this golden summer internship. Each religion (or societal pressure) tells us to perfectly meet its own standards in order to reach happiness, enlightenment, or fulfillment. But it never works. In each of these systems, we are left with overwhelming guilt, because we simply will never do enough to measure up.

We often think about Christianity legalistically, expecting the economy of Christianity to mirror the economies of every religion. We think about it just like the lawyers who questioned and rejected Jesus because he didn’t fit into their framework of works-based living. However, I believe that Jesus came to shatter that framework. The Bible teaches that Jesus came into the world to reveal the true nature of God and to save human beings from the status quo, not by telling us what to do, but by doing life with us. The Christian gospel is good news, and not merely good advice, for it reveals a God who doesn’t judge us based on our actions, but who loves us and pursues us in spite of those actions.

You might think, “Oh, Jesus lived 2,000 years ago. Times have changed. This really isn’t even good advice, much less good news.” But my experience at a law firm this summer showed me how the Christian gospel is still both good advice and, more importantly, good news. Weirdly enough, I saw how the law firm’s pursuit of its clients parallels God’s love for us in a way that I didn’t expect to see.

My summer experience

The firm I worked at this summer is very large, consisting of 22 offices with approximately 700 attorneys. Complex collaboration is needed among the offices and behind the scenes, leading to divisions in business development, marketing, and public relations. Strategies are developed to help the firm gain national and local exposure, as well as to help attorneys in more individualized meetings with clients. As an intern, I worked in all of the business development and marketing areas of the Sales Funnel, which, at the firm of my employment, is the principal tool used in task organization. There are four components of the Sales Funnel in descending order: Awareness, Cultivate, Winning, and Account Management.

How could the Sales Funnel possibly relate to God and his pursuit of us?

1. Awareness

Awareness, the first and broadest phase, targets the general public to keep the firm in the back of the mind of as many people as possible so people will consider the firm when any legal needs arise. Public relations efforts, sponsorships, and the publishing of scholarly articles fall under this umbrella.

Consider John the Baptist’s ministry proclaiming the coming of Christ. We may liken him to God’s marketing employee, cultivating awareness of God,

SALES FUNNEL

& God the Firm

who can be considered the ultimate Firm. John raised awareness among the public that God existed and that God would perform a powerful service for humanity through the person of Jesus Christ.

Let's go deeper into the awareness phase. The law firm also pays to sponsor events and signs at public gatherings, but in a much more cosmically significant way, Jesus paid to sponsor us with his blood. His sacrifice of his life earned us unconditional acceptance by God. While law firm advertisements are switched around in cycles depending on the space or event, Jesus' sponsorship is much more than a mere appearance. His sponsorship of us came through a one-time fee with an unlimited expiration date.

“His sponsorship of us came through a one-time fee with an unlimited expiration date.”

The final channel within the awareness phase comes in the form of published articles. Different attorneys across the different offices write commentary on new laws or offer some nuanced insight on a matter, sometimes collaborating with other members within their specified practice group. Just as these attorneys are experts writing about the law in the field in which they have expertise, many Christians write and produce work in the field in which they are gifted, and God can use these people to reach others and point people closer to Christ.

2. Cultivate

Those who see the value in the firm's efforts made in the awareness phase and understand how it can contribute to their personal or corporate lives then move into the next phase of the Sales Funnel: cultivate. Here, the firm holds client

events, seminars, and distributes email alerts to targeted potential clients. Similar to cultivation in farming, the clients, or seeds, have been collected, and the ground must be made ready for them to grow into a full-fledged client. This process is similar to the Christian's path to faith in Christ as described by Jesus' parable of the sower recorded in Matthew 13 of the Bible. Furthermore, just as firms intentionally target clients, Jesus drew people to him not from simply saying things that sounded nice, but from doing things which impacted people's lives. As we see in John 6, thousands of people gathered to Jesus because they had about miraculous healings he performed.

The firm then uses resources to key in on the most interested potential clients – the ones who have given up some of their time and resources to inquire into the firm's services. For example, corporations might seek counsel from Labor and Employment attorneys about best practices regarding acceptable workplace behavior. In the midst of the #MeToo movement and forward-thinking initiatives, businesses have sought my firm of employment to come give seminars for their employees. These businesses may not even be clients in terms of case law – they merely seek the advice and services of the firm on these specific issues. If a new law gets passed, the firm will send a note to the client, informing them that the law has changed and that they must promptly change their policies or actions. This message saves the client from break

ing the law, which, depending upon the severity of the infraction, could lead to total bankruptcy. In a similar way, God sends us necessary and perfect counsel, even when we may not see it that way.

3. Winning

The client has become aware of the services, properly cultivated, and ready to be won by the firm. Thus, it moves into the third phase of winning, which includes proposals and pitches. Pitches are often made on the spur of the moment or in conversation with a potential client. On the other hand, proposals are much more formal and require a good deal of preparation for an individual client. Several attorneys might work closely with the Business Development team to prepare PowerPoint presentations and certain addendums to win the business of large companies such as General Motors. There is high competition among firms for the big-name valuable clients, and each firm would send their very best teams to attempt to win the respective client's business.

A firm succeeds in winning a client by making its pitch or proposal convincing enough for the client to buy in. At that point, the firm's mantra – "Your problem is my problem; Your success is my victory." – characterizes the firm/client relationship. When a client signs a commitment with the firm, the firm reciprocates that commitment by standing by the client as mediator, representative, and advocate through both the problems and successes.

Scripture can help us make sense of why and how this works for a law firm. The story of the death and subsequent resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus recounted in the gospel of John perfectly illustrates how Jesus considers our problems his problems. His friends Martha and Mary had both lost their brother four days prior to Jesus' coming, but they had markedly different reactions to his presence. Martha professed faith that if Jesus had come earlier, he could have healed Lazarus. However, Mary's grief caused her to withdraw and not greet Jesus at all.

It is inherently human to initially hesitate to accept the love and concern of others, but it is this comfort that we all need. I remember how when I failed to reach my expectations in high school golf tournaments. I would go home, shut myself



in my room, and numb the pain of failure with Netflix or ramen noodles. When my parents would check on me, I would always be short, because I felt I didn't deserve the comfort they were offering me. I was too immature to realize what I needed. But, if they had not been there, I don't know what I would have done. Do I remind you of Mary? There is no counterfactual to suffering – it is a reality of life. But I believe that Jesus, a God who suffers along with us and took on our sins and burdens as his own, is the key to overcoming suffering.

The client's problem is the firm's problem. And even two millennia removed from modern corporate matters, this reflection brings us back. Jesus seems to bring this very approach to Martha and Mary's problem. He wept with them, and then he performed the miracle of bringing Lazarus back from the dead.

When a potential client requires legal services, it will eventually have to choose one firm or the other in order to continue. Similarly, humans are in dire need of assistance with navigating the maze of life. At some point, we must have faith enough to depend on something, and I believe that Jesus Christ offers us salvation and eternal success.

In order to raise *awareness* two thousand years ago, God sent John the Baptist, and today we have celebrities, theologians, scholars and laypeople who circulate the good news. In order to *cultivate* relationships two thousand years ago, Jesus challenged the status quo of work-based-living, and today he still challenges us to a deeper reality. In order to *win* relationships two thousand years ago, Jesus exemplified the "in it together" mentality by dying on the cross, and today he still offers us that chance at life. The only thing the individual or client must do is accept the proposal.

Account management

If one is brave enough to accept the proposal, the client moves into the fourth stage of the Sales Funnel: Account Management. In order to maintain a healthy relationship, both the client and the firm must be mutually willing to continue sacrificing resources with an eye toward care for their counterpart. The firm must be intentional in making the client feel cared for, and the client must repeatedly renew its need for the firm's legal services.

There are three ways in which the firm retains its clients, and I believe they reflect how we can maintain our relationship with God. The first way in which the firm preserves communication with clients is through the practice of client visits, both informal and formal. During these visits, the firm might remind the client of some potential violations or give counsel on a new matter. The client can also initiate these visits to ensure that they are not erring in their field of practice or to simply thank the firm for their help.

"The only thing the individual or client must do is accept the proposal."

As Christians, our "client visits" can manifest themselves in prayer. Without prayer, we have no communication with God and can lose our grip on reality. We can find ourselves slowly slipping away into sin, thereby alienating ourselves from God and losing gratitude for his essential grace. The second component of maintaining firm-client relations is client feedback. Every so often, the firm hires a

third party to solicit clients opinions on the firm's performance. Both parties must analyze past interactions for feedback for improvement. There is often knowledge to be gleaned from working through these evaluations and hearing your associate's thoughts. Christians require feedback as well, and God's consistent way of talking to us is through Scripture.

The third part of account management comes through the formation of client teams. The firm assembles groups of attorneys to cater to the specific needs of the most committed clients. These attorneys are chosen with regard to their proficiencies in certain practice areas and according to the client in question. For instance, the client team for a bank would be chosen from a pool of attorneys in the Financial Services and Transactions practice group. With regards to our spiritual environment, I believe that it is of paramount importance for Christians to physically surround themselves with people who will hold them accountable and encourage them in their relationship with God. These intentional relationships are the foundation for Christian community.

We the client and God the firm

We have now exhaustively progressed through each phase of the Sales Funnel and the according phases of God's relationship with individuals. To me, the similarities between the two models – one set forth in the Bible two thousand death and resurrection. There is an interweaving fabric to this world, and a closer look at any practice which makes organizations, relationships, and life flourish – even something as relatively arcane as the Sales Funnel – points to it: God's truth. years ago and the other in practice for corporate strategy today – cannot be pure coincidence. It seems likely that there is a deeper reality linking these two seemingly disjointed frameworks. The reality that Christians believe is this: God created this world with intentionality and revealed best practices through Jesus Christ's actions, words, and ultimate death and resurrection. There is an interweaving fabric to this world, and a closer look at any practice which makes organizations, relationships, and life flourish – even something as relatively arcane as the Sales Funnel – points to it: God's truth.



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Danny Harris is a senior majoring in Political Science and Philosophy with minors in Business and History. He is interested in attending law school, and is passionate about the philosophical and ethical questions which surround politics and the law.



“It seems likely that there is a deeper reality linking these two seemingly disjointed frameworks.”

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