

PSYCHOTHERAPY: PURPOSE, PROCESS AND PRACTICE

An Extension of the Principles of A Course in Miracles

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Introduction

Psychotherapy is the only form of therapy there is. Since only the mind can be sick, only the mind can be healed. Only the mind is in need of healing. This does not appear to be the case, for the manifestations of this world seem real indeed. Psychotherapy is necessary so that an individual can begin to question their reality. Sometimes he is able to start to open his mind without formal help, but even then it is always some change in his perception of interpersonal relationships that enables him to do so. Sometimes he needs a more structured, extended relationship with an “official” therapist. Either way, the task is the same; the patient must be helped to change his mind about the “reality” of illusions.

1. THE PURPOSE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Introduction

Very simply, the purpose of psychotherapy is to remove the blocks to truth. Its aim is to aid the patient in abandoning his fixed delusional system, and to begin to reconsider the spurious cause and effect relationships on which it rests. No one in this world escapes fear, but everyone can reconsider its causes and learn to evaluate them correctly. God has given everyone a Teacher Whose wisdom and help far exceed whatever contributions an earthly therapist can provide. Yet there are times and situations in which an earthly patient-therapist relationship becomes the means through which He offers His greater gifts to both.

What better purpose could any relationship have than to invite the Holy Spirit to enter into it and give it His Own great gift of rejoicing? What higher goal could there be for anyone than to learn to call upon God and hear His Answer? And what more transcendent aim can there be than to recall the Way, the Truth and the Life, and to remember God? To help in this is the proper purpose of psychotherapy. Could anything be holier? For psychotherapy, correctly understood, teaches forgiveness and helps the patient to recognize and accept it. And in his healing is the therapist forgiven with him.

Everyone who needs help, regardless of the form of his distress, is attacking himself, and his peace of mind is suffering in consequence. These tendencies are often described as “self destructive,” and the patient often regards them in that way himself. What he does not realize and needs to learn is that this “self,” which can attack and be attacked as well, is a concept he made up. Further, he cherishes it, defends it, and is sometimes even willing to “sacrifice” his “life” on its behalf. For he regards it as himself. This self he sees as being acted on, reacting to external forces as they demand, and helpless midst the power of the world.

Psychotherapy, then, must restore to his awareness the ability to make his own decisions. He must become willing to reverse his thinking, and to understand that what he thought projected its effects on him were made by his projections on the world. The world he sees does therefore not exist. Until this is at least in part accepted, the patient cannot see himself as really capable of making decisions. And he will fight against his freedom because he thinks that it is slavery.

The patient need not think of truth as God in order to make progress in salvation. But he must begin to separate truth from illusion, recognizing that they are not the same, and becoming increasingly willing to see illusions as false and to accept the truth as true. His Teacher will take him on from there, as far as

he is ready to go. Psychotherapy can only save him time. The Holy Spirit uses time as He thinks best, and He is never wrong. Psychotherapy under His direction is one of the means He uses to save time, and to prepare additional teachers for His work. There is no end to the help that He begins and He directs. By whatever routes He chooses, all psychotherapy leads to God in the end. But that is up to Him. We are all His psychotherapists, for He would have us all be healed in Him.

2. THE PROCESS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Introduction

Psychotherapy is a process that changes the view of the self. At best this “new” self is a more beneficent self-concept, but psychotherapy can hardly be expected to establish reality. That is not its function. If it can make way for reality, it has achieved its ultimate success. Its whole function, in the end, is to help the patient deal with one fundamental error; the belief that anger brings him something he really wants, and that by justifying attack he is protecting himself. To whatever extent he comes to realize that this is an error, to that extent is he truly saved.

Patients do not enter the therapeutic relationship with this goal in mind. On the contrary, such concepts mean little to them, or they would not need help. Their aim is to be able to retain their self-concept exactly as it is, but without the suffering that it entails. Their whole equilibrium rests on the insane belief that this is possible. And because to the sane mind it is so clearly impossible, what they seek is magic. In illusions the impossible is easily accomplished, but only at the cost of making illusions true. The patient has already paid this price. Now he wants a “better” illusion.

At the beginning, then, the patient’s goal and the therapist’s are at variance. The therapist as well as the patient may cherish false self-concepts, but their respective perceptions of “improvement” still must differ. The patient hopes to learn how to get the changes he wants without changing his self-concept to any significant extent. He hopes, in fact, to stabilize it sufficiently to include within it the magical powers he seeks in psychotherapy. He wants to make the vulnerable invulnerable and the finite limitless. The self he sees is his god, and he seeks only to serve it better.

Regardless of how sincere the therapist himself may be, he must want to change the patient’s self-concept in some way that he believes is real. The task of therapy is one of reconciling these differences. Hopefully, both will learn to give up their original goals, for it is only in relationships that salvation can be found. At the beginning, it is inevitable that patients and therapists alike accept unrealistic goals not completely free of magical overtones. They are finally given up in the minds of both.

I. The Limits on Psychotherapy

Yet the ideal outcome is rarely achieved. Therapy begins with the realization that healing is of the mind, and in psychotherapy those have come together who already believe this. It may be they will not get much further, for no one learns beyond his own readiness. Yet levels of readiness change, and when therapist or patient has reached the next one, there will be a relationship held out to them that meets the changing need. Perhaps they will come together again and advance in the same relationship, making it holier. Or perhaps each of them will enter into another commitment. Be assured of this; each will progress. Retrogression is temporary. The overall direction is one of progress toward the truth.

Psychotherapy itself cannot be creative. This is one of the errors which the ego fosters; that it is capable of true change, and therefore of true creativity. When we speak of “the saving illusion” or “the final dream,” this is not what we mean, but here is the ego’s last defense. “Resistance” is its way of looking at things; its interpretation of progress and growth. These interpretations will be wrong of necessity, because they are delusional. The changes the ego seeks to make are not really changes. They are but

deeper shadows, or perhaps different cloud patterns. Yet what is made of nothingness cannot be called new or different. Illusions are illusions; truth is truth.

Resistance as defined here can be characteristic of a therapist as well as of a patient. Either way, it sets a limit on psychotherapy because it restricts its aims. Nor can the Holy Spirit fight against the intrusions of the ego on the therapeutic process. But He will wait, and His patience is infinite. His goal is wholly undivided always. Whatever resolutions patient and therapist reach in connection with their own divergent goals, they cannot become completely reconciled as one until they join with His. Only then is all conflict over, for only then can there be certainty.

Ideally, psychotherapy is a series of holy encounters in which brothers meet to bless each other and to receive the peace of God. And this will one day come to pass for every “patient” on the face of this earth, for who except a patient could possibly have come here? The therapist is only a somewhat more specialized teacher of God. He learns through teaching, and the more advanced he is the more he teaches and the more he learns. But whatever stage he is in, there are patients who need him just that way. They cannot take more than he can give for now. Yet both will find sanity at last.

II. The Place of Religion in Psychotherapy

To be a teacher of God, it is not necessary to be religious or even to believe in God to any recognizable extent. It is necessary, however, to teach forgiveness rather than condemnation. Even in this, complete consistency is not required, for one who had achieved that point could teach salvation completely, within an instant and without a word. Yet he who has learned all things does not need a teacher, and the healed have no need for a therapist. Relationships are still the temple of the Holy Spirit, and they will be made perfect in time and restored to eternity.

Formal religion has no place in psychotherapy, but it also has no real place in religion. In this world, there is an astonishing tendency to join contradictory words into one term without perceiving the contradiction at all. The attempt to formalize religion is so obviously an ego attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable that it hardly requires elaboration here. Religion is experience; psychotherapy is experience. At the highest levels they become one. Neither is truth itself, but both can lead to truth. What can be necessary to find truth, which remains perfectly obvious, but to remove the seeming obstacles to true awareness?

No one who learns to forgive can fail to remember God. Forgiveness, then, is all that need be taught, because it is all that need be learned. All blocks to the remembrance of God are forms of unforgiveness, and nothing else. This is never apparent to the patient, and only rarely so to the therapist. The world has marshalled all its forces against this one awareness, for in it lies the ending of the world and all it stands for.

Yet it is not the awareness of God that constitutes a reasonable goal for psychotherapy. This will come when psychotherapy is complete, for where there is forgiveness truth must come. It would be unfair indeed if belief in God were necessary to psychotherapeutic success. Nor is belief in God a really meaningful concept, for God can be but known. Belief implies that unbelief is possible, but knowledge of God has no true opposite. Not to know God is to have no knowledge, and it is to this that all unforgiveness leads. And without knowledge one can have only belief.

Different teaching aids appeal to different people. Some forms of religion have nothing to do with God, and some forms of psychotherapy have nothing to do with healing. Yet if pupil and teacher join in sharing one goal, God will enter into their relationship because He has been invited to come in. In the same way, a union of purpose between patient and therapist restores the place of God to ascendance, first through Christ’s vision and then through the memory of God Himself. The process of psychother-

apy is the return to sanity. Teacher and pupil, therapist and patient, are all insane or they would not be here. Together they can find a pathway out, for no one will find sanity alone.

If healing is an invitation to God to enter into His Kingdom, what difference does it make how the invitation is written? Does the paper matter, or the ink, or the pen? Or is it he who writes that gives the invitation? God comes to those who would restore His world, for they have found the way to call to Him. If any two are joined, He must be there. It does not matter what their purpose is, but they must share it wholly to succeed. It is impossible to share a goal not blessed by Christ, for what is unseen through His eyes is too fragmented to be meaningful.

As true religion heals, so must true psychotherapy be religious. But both have many forms, because no good teacher uses one approach to every pupil. On the contrary, he listens patiently to each one, and lets him formulate his own curriculum; not the curriculum's goal, but how he can best reach the aim it sets for him. Perhaps the teacher does not think of God as part of teaching. Perhaps the psychotherapist does not understand that healing comes from God. They can succeed where many who believe they have found God will fail.

What must the teacher do to ensure learning? What must the therapist do to bring healing about? Only one thing; the same requirement salvation asks of everyone. Each one must share one goal with someone else, and in so doing, lose all sense of separate interests. Only by doing this is it possible to transcend the narrow boundaries the ego would impose upon the self. Only by doing this can teacher and pupil, therapist and patient, you and I, accept Atonement and learn to give it as it was received.

Communion is impossible alone. No one who stands apart can receive Christ's vision. It is held out to him, but he cannot hold out his hand to receive it. Let him be still and recognize his brother's need is his own. And let him then meet his brother's need as his and see that they are met as one, for such they are. What is religion but an aid in helping him to see that this is so? And what is psychotherapy except a help in just this same direction? It is the goal that makes these processes the same, for they are one in purpose and must thus be one in means.

III. The Role of the Psychotherapist

The psychotherapist is a leader in the sense that he walks slightly ahead of the patient, and helps him to avoid a few of the pitfalls along the road by seeing them first. Ideally, he is also a follower, for One should walk ahead of him to give him light to see. Without this One, both will merely stumble blindly on to nowhere. It is, however, impossible that this One be wholly absent if the goal is healing. He may, however, not be recognized. And so the little light that can be then accepted is all there is to light the way to truth.

Healing is limited by the limitations of the psychotherapist, as it is limited by those of the patient. The aim of the process, therefore, is to transcend these limits. Neither can do this alone, but when they join, the potentiality for transcending all limitations has been given them. Now the extent of their success depends on how much of this potentiality they are willing to use. The willingness may come from either one at the beginning, and as the other shares it, it will grow. Progress becomes a matter of decision; it can reach almost to Heaven or go no further than a step or two from hell.

It is quite possible for psychotherapy to seem to fail. It is even possible for the result to look like retrogression. But in the end there must be some success. One asks for help; another hears and tries to answer in the form of help. This is the formula for salvation, and must heal. Divided goals alone can interfere with perfect healing. One wholly egoless therapist could heal the world without a word, merely by being there. No one need see him or talk to him or even know of his existence. His simple Presence is enough to heal.

The ideal therapist is one with Christ. But healing is a process, not a fact. The therapist cannot progress without the patient, and the patient cannot be ready to receive the Christ or he could not be sick. In a sense, the egoless psychotherapist is an abstraction that stands at the end of the process of healing, too advanced to believe in sickness and too near to God to keep his feet on earth. Now he can help through those in need of help, for thus he carries out the plan established for salvation. The psychotherapist becomes his patient, working through other patients to express his thoughts as he receives them from the Mind of Christ.

IV. The Process of Illness

As all therapy is psychotherapy, so all illness is mental illness. It is a judgment on the Son of God, and judgment is a mental activity. Judgment is a decision, made again and again, against creation and its Creator. It is a decision to perceive the universe as you would have created it. It is a decision that truth can lie and must be lies. What, then, can illness be except an expression of sorrow and of guilt? And who could weep but for his innocence?

Once God's Son is seen as guilty, illness becomes inevitable. It has been asked for and will be received. And all who ask for illness have now condemned themselves to seek for remedies that cannot help, because their faith is in the illness and not in salvation. There can be nothing that a change of mind cannot affect, for all external things are only shadows of a decision already made. Change the decision, and how can its shadow be unchanged? Illness can be but guilt's shadow, grotesque and ugly since it mimics deformity. If a deformity is seen as real, what could its shadow be except deformed?

The descent into hell follows step by step in an inevitable course, once the decision that guilt is real has been made. Sickness and death and misery now stalk the earth in unrelenting waves, sometimes together and sometimes in grim succession. Yet all these things, however real they seem, are but illusions. Who could have faith in them once this is realized? And who could not have faith in them until he realizes this? Healing is therapy or correction, and we have said already and will say again, all therapy is psychotherapy. To heal the sick is but to bring this realization to them.

The word "cure" has come into disrepute among the more "respectable" therapists of the world, and justly so. For not one of them can cure, and not one of them understands healing. At worst, they but make the body real in their own minds, and having done so, seek for magic by which to heal the ills with which their minds endow it. How could such a process cure? It is ridiculous from start to finish. Yet having started, it must finish thus. It is as if God were the devil and must be found in evil. How could love be there? And how could sickness cure? Are not these both one question?

At best, and the word is perhaps questionable here, the "healers" of the world may recognize the mind as the source of illness. But their error lies in the belief that it can cure itself. This has some merit in a world where "degrees of error" is a meaningful concept. Yet must their cures remain temporary, or another illness rise instead, for death has not been overcome until the meaning of love is understood. And who can understand this without the Word of God, given by Him to the Holy Spirit as His gift to you?

Illness of any kind may be defined as the result of a view of the self as weak, vulnerable, evil and endangered, and thus in need of constant defense. Yet if such were really the self, defense would be impossible. Therefore, the defenses sought for must be magical. They must overcome all limits perceived in the self, at the same time making a new self-concept into which the old one cannot return. In a word, error is accepted as real and dealt with by illusions. Truth being brought to illusions, reality now becomes a threat and is perceived as evil. Love becomes feared because reality is love. Thus is the circle closed against the "inroads" of salvation.

Illness is therefore a mistake and needs correction. And as we have already emphasized, correction cannot be achieved by first establishing the “rightness” of the mistake and then overlooking it. If illness is real it cannot be overlooked in truth, for to overlook reality is insanity. Yet that is magic’s purpose; to make illusions true through false perception. This cannot heal, for it opposes truth. Perhaps an illusion of health is substituted for a little while, but not for long. Fear cannot long be hidden by illusions, for it is part of them. It will escape and take another form, being the source of all illusions.

Sickness is insanity because all sickness is mental illness, and in it there are no degrees. One of the illusions by which sickness is perceived as real is the belief that illness varies in intensity; that the degree of threat differs according to the form it takes. Herein lies the basis of all errors, for all of them are but attempts to compromise by seeing just a little bit of hell. This is a mockery so alien to God that it must be forever inconceivable. But the insane believe it because they are insane.

A madman will defend his own illusions because in them he sees his own salvation. Thus, he will attack the one who tries to save him from them, believing that he is attacking him. This curious circle of attack-defense is one of the most difficult problems with which the psychotherapist must deal. In fact, this is his central task; the core of psychotherapy. The therapist is seen as one who is attacking the patient’s most cherished possession; his picture of himself. And since this picture has become the patient’s security as he perceives it, the therapist cannot but be seen as a real source of danger, to be attacked and even killed.

The psychotherapist, then, has a tremendous responsibility. He must meet attack without attack, and therefore without defense. It is his task to demonstrate that defenses are not necessary, and that defenselessness is strength. This must be his teaching, if his lesson is to be that sanity is safe. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the insane believe that sanity is threat. This is the corollary of the “original sin”; the belief that guilt is real and fully justified. It is therefore the psychotherapist’s function to teach that guilt, being unreal, cannot be justified. But neither is it safe. And thus it must remain unwanted as well as unreal.

Salvation’s single doctrine is the goal of all therapy. Relieve the mind of the insane burden of guilt it carries so wearily, and healing is accomplished. The body is not cured. It is merely recognized as what it is. Seen rightly, its purpose can be understood. What is the need for sickness then? Given this single shift, all else will follow. There is no need for complicated change. There is no need for long analyses and wearying discussion and pursuits. The truth is simple, being one for all.

V. The Process of Healing

While truth is simple, it must still be taught to those who have already lost their way in endless mazes of complexity. This is the great illusion. In its wake comes the inevitable belief that, to be safe, one must control the unknown. This strange belief relies on certain steps which never reach to consciousness. First, it is ushered in by the belief that there are forces to be overcome to be alive at all. And next, it seems as if these forces can be held at bay only by an inflated sense of self that holds in darkness what is truly felt, and seeks to raise illusions to the light.

Let us remember that the ones who come to us for help are bitterly afraid. What they believe will help can only harm; what they believe will harm alone can help. Progress becomes impossible until the patient is persuaded to reverse his twisted way of looking at the world; his twisted way of looking at himself. The truth is simple. Yet it must be taught to those who think it will endanger them. It must be taught to those who will attack because they feel endangered, and to those who need the lesson of defenselessness above all else, to show them what is strength.

If this world were ideal, there could perhaps be ideal therapy. And yet it would be useless in an ideal state. We speak of ideal teaching in a world in which the perfect teacher could not long remain; the perfect psychotherapist is but a glimmer of a thought not yet conceived. But still we speak of what can yet be done in helping the insane within the bounds of the attainable. While they are sick, they can and must be helped. No more than that is asked of psychotherapy; no less than all he has to give is worthy of the therapist. For God Himself holds out his brother as his Savior from the world.

Healing is holy. Nothing in the world is holier than helping one who asks for help. And two come very close to God in this attempt, however limited, however lacking in sincerity. Where two have joined for healing, God is there. And He has guaranteed that He will hear and answer them in truth. They can be sure that healing is a process He directs, because it is according to His Will. We have His Word to guide us, as we try to help our brothers. Let us not forget that we are helpless of ourselves, and lean upon a Strength beyond our little scope for what to teach as well as what to learn.

A brother seeking aid can bring us gifts beyond the heights perceived in any dream. He offers us salvation, for he comes to us as Christ and Savior. What he asks is asked by God through him. And what we do for him becomes the gift we give to God. The sacred calling of God's holy Son for help in his perceived distress can be but answered by his Father. Yet He needs a voice through which to speak His holy Word; a hand to reach His Son and touch his heart. In such a process, who could not be healed? This holy interaction is the plan of God Himself, by which His Son is saved.

For two have joined. And now God's promises are kept by Him. The limits laid on both the patient and the therapist will count as nothing, for the healing has begun. What they must start their Father will complete. For He has never asked for more than just the smallest willingness, the least advance, the tiniest of whispers of His Name. To ask for help, whatever form it takes, is but to call on Him. And He will send His Answer through the therapist who best can serve His Son in all his present needs. Perhaps the answer does not seem to be a gift from Heaven. It may even seem to be a worsening and not a help. Yet let the outcome not be judged by us.

Somewhere all gifts of God must be received. In time no effort can be made in vain. It is not our perfection that is asked in our attempts to heal. We are deceived already, if we think there is a need of healing. And the truth will come to us only through one who seems to share our dream of sickness. Let us help him to forgive himself for all the trespasses with which he would condemn himself without a cause. His healing is our own. And as we see the sinlessness in him come shining through the veil of guilt that shrouds the Son of God, we will behold in him the face of Christ, and understand that it is but our own.

Let us stand silently before God's Will, and do what it has chosen that we do. There is one way alone by which we come to where all dreams began. And it is there that we will lay them down, to come away in peace forever. Hear a brother call for help and answer him. It will be God to Whom you answer, for you called on Him. There is no other way to hear His Voice. There is no other way to seek His Son. There is no other way to find your Self. Holy is healing, for the Son of God returns to Heaven through its kind embrace. For healing tells him, in the Voice for God, that all his sins have been forgiven him.

VI. The Definition of Healing

The process of psychotherapy, then, can be defined simply as forgiveness, for no healing can be anything else. The unforgiving are sick, believing they are unforgiven. The hanging-on to guilt, its hugging-close and sheltering, its loving protection and alert defense, -- all this is but the grim refusal to forgive. "God may not enter here" the sick repeat, over and over, while they mourn their loss and yet rejoice in it. Healing occurs as a patient begins to hear the dirge he sings, and questions its validity. Until he hears it, he cannot understand that it is he who sings it to himself. To hear it is the first step in recovery. To question it must then become his choice.

There is a tendency, and it is very strong, to hear this song of death only an instant, and then dismiss it uncorrected. These fleeting awarenesses represent the many opportunities given us literally “to change our tune.” The sound of healing can be heard instead. But first the willingness to question the “truth” of the song of condemnation must arise. The strange distortions woven inextricably into the self-concept, itself but a pseudo-creation, make this ugly sound seem truly beautiful. “The rhythm of the universe,” “the herald angel’s song,” all these and more are heard instead of loud discordant shrieks.

The ear translates; it does not hear. The eye reproduces; it does not see. Their task is to make agreeable whatever is called on, however disagreeable it may be. They answer the decisions of the mind, reproducing its desires and translating them into acceptable and pleasant forms. Sometimes the thought behind the form breaks through, but only very briefly, and the mind grows fearful and begins to doubt its sanity. Yet it will not permit its slaves to change the forms they look upon; the sounds they hear. These are its “remedies”; its “safeguards” from insanity.

These testimonies which the senses bring have but one purpose; to justify attack and thus keep unforgiveness unrecognized for what it is. Seen undisguised it is intolerable. Without protection it could not endure. Here is all sickness cherished, but without the recognition that this is so. For when an unforgiveness is not recognized, the form it takes seems to be something else. And now it is the “something else” that seems to terrify. But it is not the “something else” that can be healed. It is not sick, and needs no remedy. To concentrate your healing efforts here is but futility. Who can cure what cannot be sick and make it well?

Sickness takes many forms, and so does unforgiveness. The forms of one but reproduce the forms of the other, for they are the same illusion. So closely is one translated into the other, that a careful study of the form a sickness takes will point quite clearly to the form of unforgiveness that it represents. Yet seeing this will not effect a cure. That is achieved by only one recognition; that only forgiveness heals an unforgiveness, and only an unforgiveness can possibly give rise to sickness of any kind.

This realization is the final goal of psychotherapy. How is it reached? The therapist sees in the patient all that he has not forgiven in himself, and is thus given another chance to look at it, open it to re-evaluation and forgive it. When this occurs, he sees his sins as gone into a past that is no longer here. Until he does this, he must think of evil as besetting him here and now. The patient is his screen for the projection of his sins, enabling him to let them go. Let him retain one spot of sin in what he looks upon, and his release is partial and will not be sure.

No one is healed alone. This is the joyous song salvation sings to all who hear its Voice. This statement cannot be too often remembered by all who see themselves as therapists. Their patients can but be seen as the bringers of forgiveness, for it is they who come to demonstrate their sinlessness to eyes that still believe that sin is there to look upon. Yet will the proof of sinlessness, seen in the patient and accepted in the therapist, offer the mind of both a covenant in which they meet and join and are as one.

VII. The Ideal Patient-Therapist Relationship

Who, then, is the therapist, and who is the patient? In the end, everyone is both. He who needs healing must heal. Physician, heal thyself. Who else is there to heal? And who else is in need of healing? Each patient who comes to a therapist offers him a chance to heal himself. He is therefore his therapist. And every therapist must learn to heal from each patient who comes to him. He thus becomes his patient. God does not know of separation. What He knows is only that He has one Son. His knowledge is reflected in the ideal patient-therapist relationship. God comes to him who calls, and in Him he recognizes Himself.

Think carefully, teacher and therapist, for whom you pray, and who is in need of healing. For therapy is prayer, and healing is its aim and its result. What is prayer except the joining of minds in a relationship which Christ can enter? This is His home, into which psychotherapy invites Him. What is symptom cure, when another is always there to choose? But once Christ enters in, what choice is there except to have Him stay? There is no need for more than this, for it is everything. Healing is here, and happiness and peace. These are the “symptoms” of the ideal patient-therapist relationship, replacing those with which the patient came to ask for help.

The process that takes place in this relationship is actually one in which the therapist in his heart tells the patient that all his sins have been forgiven him, along with his own. What could be the difference between healing and forgiveness? Only Christ forgives, knowing His sinlessness. His vision heals perception and sickness disappears. Nor will it return again, once its cause has been removed. This, however, needs the help of a very advanced therapist, capable of joining with the patient in a holy relationship in which all sense of separation finally is overcome.

For this, one thing and one thing only is required: The therapist in no way confuses himself with God. All “unhealed healers” make this fundamental confusion in one form or another, because they must regard themselves as self-created rather than God-created. This confusion is rarely if ever in awareness, or the unhealed healer would instantly become a teacher of God, devoting his life to the function of true healing. Before he reached this point, he thought he was in charge of the therapeutic process and was therefore responsible for its outcome. His patient’s errors thus became his own failures, and guilt became the cover, dark and strong, for what should be the holiness of Christ. Guilt is inevitable in those who use their judgment in making their decisions. Guilt is impossible in those through whom the Holy Spirit speaks.

The passing of guilt is the true aim of therapy and the obvious aim of forgiveness. In this their oneness can be clearly seen. Yet who could experience the end of guilt who feels responsible for his brother in the role of guide for him? Such a function presupposes a knowledge that no one here can have; a certainty of past, present and future, and of all the effects that may occur in them. Only from this omniscient point of view would such a role be possible. Yet no perception is omniscient, nor is the tiny self of one alone against the universe able to assume he has such wisdom except in madness. That many therapists are mad is obvious. No unhealed healer can be wholly sane.

Yet it is as insane not to accept a function God has given you as to invent one He has not. The advanced therapist in no way can ever doubt the power that is in him. Nor does he doubt its Source. He understands all power in earth and Heaven belongs to him because of who he is. And he is this because of his Creator, Whose Love is in him and Who cannot fail. Think what this means; he has the gifts of God Himself to give away. His patients are God’s saints, who call upon his sanctity to make it theirs. And as he gives it to them, they behold Christ’s shining face as it looks back at them.

The insane, thinking they are God, are not afraid to offer weakness to God’s Son. But what they see in him because of this they fear indeed. The unhealed healer cannot but be fearful of his patients, and suspect them of the treachery he sees in him. He tries to heal, and thus at times he may. But he will not succeed except to some extent and for a little while. He does not see the Christ in him who calls. What answer can he give to one who seems to be a stranger; alien to the truth and poor in wisdom, without the god who must be given him? Behold your God in him, for what you see will be your Answer.

Think what the joining of two brothers really means. And then forget the world and all its little triumphs and its dreams of death. The same are one, and nothing now can be remembered of the world of guilt. The room becomes a temple, and the street a stream of stars that brushes lightly past all sickly dreams. Healing is done, for what is perfect needs no healing, and what remains to be forgiven where there is no sin?

Be thankful, therapist, that you can see such things as this, if you but understand your proper role. But if you fail in this, you have denied that God created you, and so you will not know you are His Son. Who is your brother now? What saint can come to take you home with him? You lost the way. And can you now expect to see in him an answer that you have refused to give? Heal and be healed. There is no other choice of pathways that can ever lead to peace. O let your patient in, for he has come to you from God. Is not his holiness enough to wake your memory of Him?

3. THE PRACTICE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

I. The Selection of Patients

Everyone who is sent to you is a patient of yours. This does not mean that you select him, nor that you choose the kind of treatment that is suitable. But it does mean that no one comes to you by mistake. There are no errors in God's plan. It would be an error, however, to assume that you know what to offer everyone who comes. This is not up to you to decide. There is a tendency to assume that you are being called on constantly to make sacrifices of yourself for those who come. This could hardly be true. To demand sacrifice of yourself is to demand a sacrifice of God, and He knows nothing of sacrifice. Who could ask of Perfection that He be imperfect?

Who, then, decides what each brother needs? Surely not you, who do not yet recognize who he is who asks. There is Something in him that will tell you, if you listen. And that is the answer; listen. Do not demand, do not decide, do not sacrifice. Listen. What you hear is true. Would God send His Son to you and not be sure you recognize his needs? Think what God is telling you; He needs your voice to speak for Him. Could anything be holier? Or a greater gift to you? Would you rather choose who would be god, or hear the Voice of Him Who is God in you?

Your patients need not be physically present for you to serve them in the Name of God. This may be hard to remember, but God will not have His gifts to you limited to the few you actually see. You can see others as well, for seeing is not limited to the body's eyes. Some do not need your physical presence. They need you as much, and perhaps even more, at the instant they are sent. You will recognize them in whatever way can be most helpful to both of you. It does not matter how they come. They will be sent in whatever form is most helpful; a name, a thought, a picture, an idea, or perhaps just a feeling of reaching out to someone somewhere. The joining is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It cannot fail to be accomplished.

A holy therapist, an advanced teacher of God, never forgets one thing; he did not make the curriculum of salvation, nor did he establish his part in it. He understands that his part is necessary to the whole, and that through it he will recognize the whole when his part is complete. Meanwhile he must learn, and his patients are the means sent to him for his learning. What could he be but grateful for them and to them? They come bearing God. Would he refuse this Gift for a pebble, or would he close the door on the Savior of the world to let in a ghost? Let him not betray the Son of God. Who calls on him is far beyond his understanding. Yet would he not rejoice that he can answer, when only thus will he be able to hear the call and understand that it is his?

II. Is Psychotherapy a Profession?

Strictly speaking the answer is no. How could a separate profession be one in which everyone is engaged? And how could any limits be laid on an interaction in which everyone is both patient and therapist in every relationship in which he enters? Yet practically speaking, it can still be said that there are those who devote themselves primarily to healing of one sort or another as their chief function. And it is to them that a large number of others turn for help. That, in effect, is the practice of therapy. These are

therefore “officially” helpers. They are devoted to certain kinds of needs in their professional activities, although they may be far more able teachers outside of them. These people need no special rules, of course, but they may be called upon to use special applications of the general principles of healing.

First, the professional therapist is in an excellent position to demonstrate that there is no order of difficulty in healing. For this, however, he needs special training, because the curriculum by which he became a therapist probably taught him little or nothing about the real principles of healing. In fact, it probably taught him how to make healing impossible. Most of the world’s teaching follows a curriculum in judgment, with the aim of making the therapist a judge.

Even this the Holy Spirit can use, and will use, given the slightest invitation. The unhealed healer may be arrogant, selfish, unconcerned, and actually dishonest. He may be uninterested in healing as his major goal. Yet something happened to him, however slight it may have been, when he chose to be a healer, however misguided the direction he may have chosen. That “something” is enough. Sooner or later that something will rise and grow; a patient will touch his heart, and the therapist will silently ask him for help. He has himself found a therapist. He has asked the Holy Spirit to enter the relationship and heal it. He has accepted the Atonement for himself.

God is said to have looked on all He created and pronounced it good. No, He declared it perfect, and so it was. And since His creations do not change and last forever, so it is now. Yet neither a perfect therapist nor a perfect patient can possibly exist. Both must have denied their perfection, for their very need for each other implies a sense of lack. A one-to-one relationship is not One Relationship. Yet it is the means of return; the way God chose for the return of His Son. In that strange dream a strange correction must enter, for only that is the call to awake. And what else should therapy be? Awake and be glad, for all your sins have been forgiven you. This is the only message that any two should ever give each other.

Something good must come from every meeting of patient and therapist. And that good is saved for both, against the day when they can recognize that only that was real in their relationship. At that moment the good is returned to them, blessed by the Holy Spirit as a gift from their Creator as a sign of His Love. For the therapeutic relationship must become like the relationship of the Father and the Son. There is no other, for there is nothing else. The therapists of this world do not expect this outcome, and many of their patients would not be able to accept help from them if they did. Yet no therapist really sets the goal for the relationships of which he is a part. His understanding begins with recognizing this, and then goes on from there.

It is in the instant that the therapist forgets to judge the patient that healing occurs. In some relationships this point is never reached, although both patient and therapist may change their dreams in the process. Yet it will not be the same dream for both of them, and so it is not the dream of forgiveness in which both will someday wake. The good is saved; indeed is cherished. But only little time is saved. The new dreams will lose their temporary appeal and turn to dreams of fear, which is the content of all dreams. Yet no patient can accept more than he is ready to receive, and no therapist can offer more than he believes he has. And so there is a place for all relationships in this world, and they will bring as much good as each can accept and use.

Yet it is when judgment ceases that healing occurs, because only then it can be understood that there is no order of difficulty in healing. This is a necessary understanding for the healed healer. He has learned that it is no harder to wake a brother from one dream than from another. No professional therapist can hold this understanding consistently in his mind, offering it to all who come to him. There are some in this world who have come very close, but they have not accepted the gift entirely in order to stay and let their understanding remain on earth until the closing of time. They could hardly be called professional therapists. They are the Saints of God. They are the Saviors of the world. Their image re-

mains, because they have chosen that it be so. They take the place of other images, and help with kindly dreams.

Once the professional therapist has realized that minds are joined, he can also recognize that order of difficulty in healing is meaningless. Yet well before he reaches this in time he can go towards it. Many holy instants can be his along the way. A goal marks the end of a journey, not the beginning, and as each goal is reached another can be dimly seen ahead. Most professional therapists are still at the very start of the beginning stage of the first journey. Even those who have begun to understand what they must do may still oppose the setting-out. Yet all the laws of healing can be theirs in just an instant. The journey is not long except in dreams.

The professional therapist has one advantage that can save enormous time if it is properly used. He has chosen a road in which there is great temptation to misuse his role. This enables him to pass by many obstacles to peace quite quickly, if he escapes the temptation to assume a function that has not been given him. To understand there is no order of difficulty in healing, he must also recognize the equality of himself and the patient. There is no halfway point in this. Either they are equal or not. The attempts of therapists to compromise in this respect are strange indeed. Some utilize the relationship merely to collect bodies to worship at their shrine, and this they regard as healing. Many patients, too, consider this strange procedure as salvation. Yet at each meeting there is One Who says, "My brother, choose again."

Do not forget that any form of specialness must be defended, and will be. The defenseless therapist has the strength of God with him, but the defensive therapist has lost sight of the Source of his salvation. He does not see and he does not hear. How, then, can he teach? Because it is the Will of God that he take his place in the plan for salvation. Because it is the Will of God that his patient be helped to join with him there. Because his inability to see and hear does not limit the Holy Spirit in any way. Except in time. In time there can be a great lag between the offering and the acceptance of healing. This is the veil across the face of Christ. Yet it can be but an illusion, because time does not exist and the Will of God has always been exactly as it is.

III. The Question of Payment

No one can pay for therapy, for healing is of God and He asks for nothing. It is, however, part of His plan that everything in this world be used by the Holy Spirit to help in carrying out the plan. Even an advanced therapist has some earthly needs while he is here. Should he need money it will be given him, not in payment, but to help him better serve the plan. Money is not evil. It is nothing. But no one here can live with no illusions, for he must yet strive to have the last illusion be accepted by everyone everywhere. He has a mighty part in this one purpose, for which he came. He stays here but for this. And while he stays he will be given what he needs to stay.

Only an unhealed healer would try to heal for money, and he will not succeed to the extent to which he values it. Nor will he find his healing in the process. There will be those of whom the Holy Spirit asks some payment for His purpose. There will be those from whom He does not ask. It should not be the therapist who makes these decisions. There is a difference between payment and cost. To give money where God's plan allots it has no cost. To withhold it from where it rightfully belongs has enormous cost. The therapist who would do this loses the name of healer, for he could never understand what healing is. He cannot give it, and so he does not have it.

The therapists of this world are indeed useless to the world's salvation. They make demands, and so they cannot give. Patients can pay only for the exchange of illusions. This, indeed, must demand payment, and the cost is great. A "bought" relationship cannot offer the only gift whereby all healing is accomplished. Forgiveness, the Holy Spirit's only dream, must have no cost. For if it does, it merely crucifies God's Son again. Can this be how he is forgiven? Can this be how the dream of sin will end?

The right to live is something no one need fight for. It is promised him, and guaranteed by God. Therefore it is a right the therapist and patient share alike. If their relationship is to be holy, whatever one needs is given by the other; whatever one lacks the other supplies. Herein is the relationship made holy, for herein both are healed. The therapist repays the patient in gratitude, as does the patient repay him. There is no cost to either. But thanks are due to both, for the release from long imprisonment and doubt. Who would not be grateful for such a gift? Yet who could possibly imagine that it could be bought?

It has well been said that to him who hath shall be given. Because he has, he can give. And because he gives, he shall be given. This is the law of God, and not of the world. So it is with God's healers. They give because they have heard His Word and understood it. All that they need will thus be given them. But they will lose this understanding unless they remember that all they have comes only from God. If they believe they need anything from a brother, they will recognize him as a brother no longer. And if they do this, a light goes out even in Heaven. Where God's Son turns against himself, he can look only upon darkness. He has himself denied the light, and cannot see.

One rule should always be observed: No one should be turned away because he cannot pay. No one is sent by accident to anyone. Relationships are always purposeful. Whatever their purpose may have been before the Holy Spirit entered them, they are always His potential temple; the resting place of Christ and home of God Himself. Whoever comes has been sent. Perhaps he was sent to give his brother the money he needed. Both will be blessed thereby. Perhaps he was sent to teach the therapist how much he needs forgiveness, and how valueless is money in comparison. Again will both be blessed. Only in terms of cost could one have more. In sharing, everyone must gain a blessing without cost.

This view of payment may well seem impractical, and in the eyes of the world it would be so. Yet not one worldly thought is really practical. How much is gained by striving for illusions? How much is lost by throwing God away? And is it possible to do so? Surely it is impractical to strive for nothing, and to attempt to do what is impossible. Then stop a while, long enough to think of this: You have perhaps been seeking for salvation without recognizing where to look. Whoever asks your help can show you where. What greater gift than this could you be given? What greater gift is there that you would give?

Physician, healer, therapist, teacher, heal thyself. Many will come to you carrying the gift of healing, if you so elect. The Holy Spirit never refuses an invitation to enter and abide with you. He will give you endless opportunities to open the door to your salvation, for such is His function. He will also tell you exactly what your function is in every circumstance and at all times. Whoever He sends you will reach you, holding out his hand to his Friend. Let the Christ in you bid him welcome, for that same Christ is in him as well. Deny him entrance, and you have denied the Christ in you. Remember the sorrowful story of the world, and the glad tidings of salvation. Remember the plan of God for the restoration of joy and peace. And do not forget how very simple are the ways of God:

You were lost in the darkness of the world until you asked for light. And then God sent His Son to give it to you.