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Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought (Book Review)

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Olthuis emphasizes that developing a caring, trusting relationship leading to a safe milieu in which therapists can work through past hurts, issues, and traumas is more important and more dynamic than therapeutic methods. He relates that techniques can be used to help guide or move the therapist through recalling areas of their life that they need to revisit or visit for the first time, but the techniques should always be supplementary to maintaining the caring, compassionate, and loving therapeutic relationship.

In the second part of his book, Olthuis discusses five important characteristics of a caring therapeutic relationship and the four stages one would go through in such a process. One characteristic that he emphasizes is welcoming, about which I think many therapists can learn a great deal more. Olthuis highlights the importance of being genuinely warm and inviting when beginning to work with therapists (105). He stresses that doing so can ease people's fears and possibly engender some hope that they might not have to go through their distress alone (107). Paying special attention to welcoming also presents an environment of openness and hospitality to the therapist that may aid in the development of a trusting relationship. Olthuis suggests that a warm welcome can lead to a blessing that calls for God's healing to be a part of the therapy. He further notes that it makes sense that therapists would want to bless those people they work with by lifting them up to God (109). Olthuis writes about the importance of paying attention to the physical environment of the meeting place and the use of open-ended questions in the beginning of therapy to allow the therapist to go where he or she needs to go.

Olthuis also writes about the "good-enough therapist" (117). This is a therapist who takes the risk of not always

being in control of what happens in the relationship, one who is not too pushy but will confront when necessary. Such a therapist is not an expert in all things but listens from the heart and does not criticize. She is real and does not act out a role but genuinely admits faults and challenges. I would suggest that all those who work in professional counseling capacities should check if they meet the requirements to be "good-enough" for those they work with.

I appreciated and was humbled by Olthuis' emphasis on God being the true healer and therapists being facilitators of an environment in which His mercy could be showered on the therapist. As I finished reading the book, I understood why the book's title is so fitting. It is indeed a "beautiful risk" to journey with a fellow human being on an unknown path in which there is hope of healing because God is love and the journey is a response to that love.

I found *The Beautiful Risk* to be a challenging read in that it pushed me to critically re-evaluate how I understand and practice psychotherapy. It also reminded me that God is the healer and that God uses the therapist's gifts to redeem His most precious creatures, his created people. I would recommend this book for both seasoned counseling professionals and those in training. I think it would be especially valuable as a springboard for consultation sessions about the therapeutic relationship. Additionally, some may want to share excerpts with therapists as a way of helping them break through difficult areas by relating to some of the therapists' stories that are detailed in the book. No matter how one utilizes this book, it is sure to challenge and re-form the reader's thinking about the beautiful risk that is the psychotherapy journey.

Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought, by Daniel J. Price. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002. 322pp. Reviewed by Kevin J. Eames, Assistant Professor of

Psychology and theology have glared at one another across a chasm of suspicion ever since Freud's claim that religion is a manifestation of neurosis. Efforts have been made to bridge the gap, from the earlier pastoral counseling literature that uncritically adapted person-centered counseling methods to the more careful and scholarly works that have appeared in journals like Rosemead's *Journal of Psychology and Theology* or exemplified by the Jones and Butman work *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (1991). Daniel J. Price has contributed a unique volume to the corpus of "integration" literature with his book comparing the theological anthropology of Karl Barth with object relations psychology. It is an intriguing parallel that identifies the

human need for relationship as the defining anthropological construct derived from the *imago Dei*.

Price's central goal is to compare Barth's mature theological anthropology with elements of a cluster of neo-Freudian theories generally called object relations psychology. Price asserts that the comparison is important because "both give due attention to the relational matrix of human personhood" (9). Price highlights the importance of this overarching theme by describing the development of Barth's anthropology in its historical and intellectual context. He then describes the development of object relations psychology as both an extension of and a reaction against the reductionistic, mechanistic psychoanalysis of Freud. Price focuses on the theories of the

Scottish psychiatrist R. W. Fairbairn, a member of the so-called British school of object relations psychology, because Price believes Fairbairn's theories most closely parallel Barth's approach to the relational core of human nature.

Price identifies two central philosophical positions as providing a context against which Barth would develop his theological anthropology: the idealism of Kant and Schleiermacher's emphasis on religious consciousness which reduces theology to a psychology of religion. To be sure, Barth agreed with Kant's criticism of the Enlightenment's supremacy of human reason, but he disagreed with Kant's alternative. As Price notes, "Kant's distinction between appearance and reality has contributed to the modern split between fact and value, secular and sacred, science and religion" (50). Barth sought to unify what Kant had torn asunder by viewing human essence as being in relation with the triune God in Christ, self, and others, in the context of time and space. This position united the spiritual and empirical realities that constituted the essence of human nature. Embedded in this view is the rejection of the isolation of individual, rational thought that was promulgated in Enlightenment thinking. Barth rejected the age-old analogy of being, and, instead, he embraced a dynamic analogy of relationship. God is fundamentally relational; humankind made in the image of God is also essentially relational.

After describing Barth's anthropology, Price provides a cogent description of Freud's anthropology and points of convergence and divergence with object relations psychology. While Freud's psychological anthropology was (ostensibly) indebted to Newtonian mechanics and biological reductionism in the maintenance of a closed system wherein instinctual urges were regulated, Fairbairn's object relations psychology shifted the focus away from primitive urges for gratification. For Fairbairn, the psyche is not a tripartite entity (Freud's id, ego, and superego) but a unified ego that strives not for instinctual gratification but for relationship. The developing infant forms an attachment with a primary caregiver; this relationship is reflected in the infant's psyche as a representational object. The quality of the actual relationship between infant and care-giver will determine the coherence of the internalized object in the infant's psyche. A healthy relationship will foster healthy object relations; an abusive or neglectful relationship will foster anti-social, aggressive, or other pathological object relations. Whereas Freud is credited for identifying the importance of infant-caregiver relations and early infantile experiences, Fairbairn and other object relations theorists expanded Freud's views by replacing the libidinal energy of the id with the interpersonal drive for relationship.

Price's parallel between the two perspectives is inno-

vative. Both Barth and Fairbairn place high importance on interpersonal relations. Persons are defined in terms of their social context – by the personal history of their social interactions. Moreover, both avoid the fragmentation of self encouraged by Post-Enlightenment thinking and embrace a holistic view of self that is fundamentally defined by relationship to an "other." Finally, both systems of anthropology reject a closed-systems approach; persons are not self-contained static entities but grow dynamically through interaction with others interpersonally (Fairbairn) and with God, so that "faith is dynamically understood as a covenant relation with God that entails an encounter with other human beings" (235). Price's concluding concern is to rectify the notion that Barth's neo-orthodoxy makes dialogue with the human sciences impossible; Price's attempt at rapprochement between Barth's theological anthropology and what he describes as "scientific psychology" is his demonstration that such a dialogue is not only possible but also fruitful.

The principal weakness in Price's thesis is his use of what he terms "scientific psychology" to describe both Freudian psychoanalysis and object relations psychology, neither of which claims data-based empirical observation as foundational to their theories. Price allows these two positions to stand in as monolithic representatives for the human sciences, when such representation is implausible on several counts. First, these psychological models are based on a Freudian epistemology whose foundation is wholly idiosyncratic. Freudian epistemology consists of a series of complex, well-developed *a priori* assumptions that are then confirmed by data collected from clinical observation. This process of knowledge-building is inherently biased, and is therefore inconsistent with a "scientific" approach to psychology. Other attachment-related theories as developed by Konrad Lorenz, John Bowlby, and Harry Harlow, allow more empirical data to inform their theoretical foundations. Second, Price neglects other systems of psychology that maintain similar views of the importance of social interaction, e.g. Sullivanian psychiatry, family systems theory, and social learning.

Harry Stack Sullivan pioneered an interpersonal approach to psychiatry that viewed mental illness within the social context in which it is developed and maintained. It is continued through an interpersonal approach to treating depression that emphasizes resolution of grief and loss and seeks to rectify ruptured interpersonal relations as a means of treating depression. Family systems theory as pioneered by theorists from a variety of theoretical perspectives asserts that individuals exist in dynamic systems that have unique boundaries, rules, norms, and communication styles. Mental illness becomes a family affair as unhealthy systems produce pathology in a single individual called the "identified

patient.” Social learning is primarily associated with Bandura, who reported on the efficacy of modeling by others as a means of learning. Social learning is based on a cognitive-behavioral approach to human behavior that has gained ascendancy in psychological science due to its empirical robustness. While still identifying the importance of interpersonal relations, Bandura and others have also acknowledged the importance of cognitive structures and operations in human behavior. All of these schools suggest issues of salience to Barth’s anthropology, and all of them are excluded from Price’s work when he refers to “scientific psychology.”

It is a significant oversight, not only because it neglects important developments in contemporary psychology, but also because it weakens Price’s assertion that Barth’s theological anthropology provides opportu-

nity for dialogue with the human sciences. In attempting to bridge the gap between the theological and the scientific, Price has selected a psychological perspective that is more speculative than empirical. However, this perspective does provide opportunity for further dialogue between Barthianism and more empirical approaches to psychological science.

Despite its decidedly narrow treatment of scientific psychology, Price introduces a salient point in Barth’s theology that adds insight to the psychological exploration of human relationships. Based in part on his reading of Scripture and his understanding of the Trinity, Barth asserts that we are foundationally relational persons. When psychologists study groups, families, couples, organizations, or individuals engaged in social behavior, they are observing the manifestations of what is ultimately the image of God.

Cotton Patch for the Kingdom, by Ann Louise Coble. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002. 240pp. Reviewed by Jonathan Warner, Associate Professor of Economics, Dordt College.

Clarence Jordan is probably best known for two things. He was the founder of the Koinonia Christian community in southern Georgia, where an encounter with Millard Fuller led to the formation of Habitat for Humanity. He also produced a paraphrased version of much of the New Testament in the language of the people of Georgia, the “Cotton Patch” version.

Ann Coble, a professor of Christian education and religion at Westminster College, has written a highly-readable account of Jordan’s life and struggles. Jordan, she says, was heavily influenced by his reading of Scripture, and this reading impressed upon him the disconnect between a church that said that “Jesus loves ... all the children of the world” but that had no black members in its congregation and did not reach out to them. He once berated his father for rebuking a black who came to the family’s front door, rather than the back, to deliver their dry-cleaning.

Clarence Jordan was born into a Southern Baptist family in 1912. After graduating from high school, he studied agriculture at the University of Georgia in Athens. While there, he was active in the Baptist Student Union, and heard God’s call to preach. At seminary in Louisville, he studied both Greek and Hebrew, because “I didn’t want some little jackleg preacher tying me up in knots because I didn’t know what the Lord said, and I rooted myself in the Greek language that I might understand” (40). Later, Jordan would preach using a Greek New Testament (rarely did he preach from the Old Testament), translating passages as he went along.

Dr. Coble argues that it was Jordan’s conception of what the Kingdom of God would be like (based most

explicitly on the Sermon on the Mount, and the model of the early chapters of Acts) that led him, in 1942, to found Koinonia farm – a community based on the radical sharing of property and income. The farm, near Americus in Sumter County, Georgia, was to be a demonstration of how this vision could be lived out. Because racial discrimination and the poverty of the rural black population were major features of life in southern Georgia that contradicted the Gospel message, Jordan was concerned to address these issues. As long as this involved teaching farmers (both black and white) more productive techniques, Jordan found no opposition. The story was very different, though, when it became known locally that Jordan was eating with his black co-workers and treating them equally with the whites living on the farm.

At its worst, during the 1950’s, local opposition to the integrationist nature of Koinonia led to the refusal of local businesses to trade with the farm (this refusal led to the development of the mail-order business for pecans and other farm produce, which today remains the main source of revenue for Koinonia). Attacks by the Ku Klux Klan followed, with the farm’s roadside stand being torched twice. The Jordans were disfellowshipped by the local Baptist churches, and were told that they, and the rest of the Koinonia residents, were unwelcome at any of the churches in Americus.

Jordan’s response to the civil rights movement puzzled many. While he obviously opposed segregation, he refused to take part in acts of co-ordinated civil disobedience, sit-ins, or boycotts. “We’ve been on the other end of a boycott. I know first-hand how much a boycott hurts. I can’t participate in the boycott and be doing unto others