

BASICS OF THE ASCETICAL (CHRISTIAN) PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Abstract

It is obvious that contemporary man is suffering. His sufferings often seem pointless and causeless. Modern science more and more comes to reveal and acknowledge that human sufferings have a psychosomatic basis. In some of the cases, these sufferings are noogenic neuroses. They do not originate from the psychological dimension but from the noological or spiritual one of human existence. The pointlessness of life is the basic cause for the noogenic neurosis and depression from which the humankind suffers. Hence, the many escapes from such experienced reality into various addictions. Possible way towards healing is to retrieve one's meaning of life, to strengthen his *will to meaning*. Religion has always been—and still remains—a powerful and appealing purpose that fulfills the life and being of the believers. This article demonstrates the systematization of the spiritual development of a person presented in a table of the harmony of the ascetic-hesychastic struggle, according which everyone can find his place on the ladder of spiritual development, become aware, and reconcile the mode of personal struggle according to his spiritual development. The reconciliation of the primary function of the mind with its secondary function—the intellect, is of an essential importance. Contemporary religious psychology do not regard man merely as a biological or a psychological being. The subject matter of research is the human being as a whole, as a spiritual person that is characterized by autonomy, regarding the biological and psychological processes. The importance of understanding the spiritual level of human existence enables holistic approach and experiencing of the human personality as a whole. Furthermore, it offers new perspectives of psychotherapeutic action not only within the range of the classical psychotherapeutic modalities but also within the range of the applied Christian Psychotherapy.

Key words: noogenic neurosis, reconciliation of the mode of life according to one's spiritual development, ascetical-hesychastic struggle, healing.

Introduction

It is obvious that contemporary man is suffering. His sufferings often seem pointless and causeless. Modern science more and more comes to reveal and acknowledge that many of the human sufferings have a psychosomatic basis. These teachings have been represented by the Church Fathers ever since its beginning. In the following lines, we are going to deal exactly with this issue not as an absolute claim but as an introduction, a broadening of the spiritual and intellectual horizons and as a basis for new and creative thinking.

The world-famous psychotherapist Viktor Frankl believes that the seeking for meaning and purpose (expedience) is inherent to human being. According to him, the main symptom and cause in even 55% of all neurotic impediments (disorders) is the loss of purpose for living. Exactly for this reason, Frankl introduces a new nosological unit—*noogenic neurosis*, which he considers to be a consequence of the living into a real existential vacuum and its derived existential frustrations. Furthermore, its main symptom is experiencing the loss of meaning in life. This is manifested as a feeling of

inner emptiness about which one often is not aware; in other words—as absence of values that fill everyday life.

Noogenic neuroses, which are particularly common among the youth of today, do not originate from the psychological dimension but from the noological or spiritual (from Greek *nous*—"spirit") one of human existence. They are not based on complexes and conflicts in the usual sense of the word but rather on conflicts of conscience, clashes of values, existential emptiness and existential frustration caused exclusively by exogenous reasons. The expression *existential* given by Frankl has a triple meaning: 1) it refers to existence itself, i.e. to the specific human way of being, 2) to the meaning of existence and 3) to the seeking of a concrete meaning of one's personal existence.

Using the term *existential frustration*, Frankl refers to a serious damage of the *will to meaning* in contemporary man. This *will to meaning* is most profound, or more precisely, it is the basic driving force behind each human action. According to Viktor Frankl, "neither instinct nor tradition tells the youth of today what they must and are supposed to do. Hence, very soon they will not even know what they like doing. However, from that moment the youth will want to do either what others do, or what they are ordered to do." Therefore, how can these young people stricken by noogenic neurosis and its severe consequences reactivate their will to meaning?

Dmitry Avdeev M.D., PhD, gives another characteristic example of this issue explained with the language of Christian psychotherapy. "In the structure of depressive disorders, only 2% are endogenous depressions (not exogenous), i.e. depressions that are not related with the so-called psycho-emotional traumas and which are developed from natural-biological causes. In the first place, these are depressions within the range of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder etc. The causes for 98% of depressions have spiritually psychological origin [noogenic neuroses]. These are visible examples of the necessity of Christian evaluation of psychotic pathology. In most of the cases, the depression is related with a sin, and this is what needs to be remembered and revealed. Alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, sexual distortions... this list can be expanded. All of these comprise the so-called sinful conditions."

Since the most frequent cause for alcoholism and drug addiction is the loss of meaning in life (*a noogenic neurosis*, according to Viktor Frankl)—after some quite long period of existential vacuum and frustration—the best way towards healing is to retrieve the meaning of life, to strengthen one's *will to meaning*, especially in young alcoholics and drug-addicts. Religion has always been and still remains a powerful and appealing purpose that fulfills the life and being of each person.

In fact, it is well known that the great spiritual-religious systems have had an enormous influence in the creating of the foundations of various psychotherapeutic approaches and in the inspiration of their founders. Although Christian psychotherapy—despite several quite good attempts in the last few decades—has not been fully systematized yet, it has already been living for two thousand years in the therapeutic practices and in the works of the Holy Fathers of the Church. Let this article be a brief introduction to its secrets.

Systematization of the Spiritual Development of a Person

According to the Patristic ascetical literature, the cognizant Orthodox spiritual life or struggle in knowledge is developed at three levels of the spiritual growth: *purification of the heart from passions*, *illumination of the mind* and *godlikeness*. The level of spiritual growth is determined by the quality of prayer. These teachings have been lost in other Christian denominations.

At the first level of the spiritual growth, the prayer is uttered either orally or with one's inner voice, by collecting one's mind in the prayer words. Mainly, the mind energy is purified from the influence of the passions (the *id*) and from the demon (the archetype of evil). At a higher ascetical-ethical stage, the second level of spiritual growth occurs when the divine (the archetype of good) is revealed in the enough purified (from the passions) heart and when the mind—drawn in by the divine—follows the prayer words within the heart. Mainly, it is the essence of the mind that is purified. At this level, the prayer is called *ascetical mind-and-heart prayer*.

Why is it important one to be aware of this? For a proper diagnosis and an appropriate

therapy, i.e. for reconciling of one's lifestyle with the level of his spiritual growth. Unless this reconciliation is achieved and brought to knowledge, one's spiritual life may be named anything but correct. Generally, the consequences of such lifestyle are having an ungrounded high opinion of oneself that is, having ideas of greatness or briefly said—delusion, that is, a state of mind that dwells in cognitive distortions (contaminations—according to Eric Berne's Theory of Transactional Analysis).

Naturally, one falls from his spiritual path if, for instance, the purifying of his mind energy—which occurs at the first level and is also termed as *the first beholding of the light*

by the Fathers—is abused for judging and condemning others (even in public) instead of being used to see and correct his own flaws. On the other hand, the illumination of the mind acts in another direction. The one who has the gift of illumination does not judge or condemn others but takes care for their salvation. Indeed, the subtle feeling of presence of the divine enlightenment in him does not allow him neither to judge nor to condemn others.

Therefore, the Fathers require the spiritual life to be led in knowledge—in cognizance. Only then can it be justly named *Orthodox* spiritual life.

Levels of spiritual development	What is the prayer like	What is purified	What is stressed in the struggle	The temptations are mainly	The mode of organization of monastic life	Clerical rank	Obedience	Love
I. PURIFICATION	oral or with the mind	the mind energy	placing of the mind in a process of healing (ascetic humility)	from within (due to the captivity to passions)	coenobium	deacon	absolute or blind obedience	eros
II. ILLUMINATION	ascetic mind-and-heart prayer	the essence of the mind (which is in the heart)	keeping of the mind within heart and love toward one's enemies	from outside (through people)	skete	presbyter	it depends on the level at which one's spiritual father is	friendship (closeness)
III. DEIFICATION	unceasing or graceful mind-and-heart prayer	deification of the whole man, both body and soul	prayer and mourning for the whole world	from outside (through people and from the demon himself)	hermitage	episcopos	not to a man	love

Figure 1 – Table of the Harmony of the Ascetic-hesychastic Struggle (according which everyone can find his place on the ladder of spiritual development, become aware and reconcile the mode of his personal struggle in accordance with his spiritual development and position in the Church)

Differentiating between Christian and Scientific Psychotherapy due to Reconciliation

The Holy Fathers make a distinction between two ways of life: natural and unnatural.

A person's natural way of life develops at three levels of the spiritual growth: *purifying of the heart from passions*, *illumination of the mind* (with the gift of ascetical mind-and-heart prayer) and *godlikeness* or *deification* (with the gift of graceful or ceaseless mind-and-heart prayer).

An individual's unnatural way of life develops at three lower levels of mental existence. According to the contemporary psychology, they are *neuroses*, *personality disorders* (*sociopathy*) and *psychoses*.

According to the Holy Fathers' teachings, the one who is at the level of *purifying* is able to help the ones troubled by neuroses. The one who is at the level of *illumination*—beside neurotic persons—can help sociopaths as well. In addition, the one who is at the level of *godlikeness* (a wonderworker, healer) is able to help, that is, to heal not only the first two types but also people with psychosis as well.

The demonic influence over those who lead a natural way of life is very limited and rarely externally noticeable, while their spiritual states are easily distinguished.

The demonic influence over those who lead an unnatural way of life is generally noticeable and diverse. During the time of the

venerable Desert Fathers, the terms of contemporary psychology did not exist, but on the other hand, the term *darkening of the intellect* was in use. In such condition, one becomes entirely incapable of rational reasoning. According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, there are two categories of will—*rational* and *natural will*. Having lost *rational will*, a person is incapable of controlling his thoughts and desires. There is no hindrance (censorship by the supraconscious, by the superego over the id) to stop himself in his own destructive intentions. He acts automatically, following the principle of *natural will*—the striving of nature towards what is similar to it (primordial impulses from the id—the unconscious). In psychological terms, this corresponds to conditions of instinctive and willful disinhibition of various degrees (for instance, impulsive, hazardous, homicidal, suicidal behavior etc.).

The acceptance of automatic thoughts as one's own, the occurrence of miscellaneous thoughts like ego-syntonic or ego-dystonic—which the person experiences in different ways in various mental disorders, such as negative thoughts, obsessive thoughts, overrated thoughts, delusional ideas—are usually noticeable in people's behavior. Hence, the numerous mutual variations and vagueness that result in innumerable divisions or classifications of mental disorders (see ICD-10), as well as numerous definitions of the manifestations at the three levels of the unnatural way of life.

Overcoming the Dualism between the Mind and the Intellect

According to the Christian Anthropology, man is both soul and body. The human soul consists of three powers: the rational one, which is the mind, and two irrational ones, the will and desire. Their center is man's spiritual heart. All of these powers need to function in reconciliation; otherwise, the man cannot be considered as mentally healthy. Often, beside the mind, the existence of intellect is also mentioned. What is the intellect? It is highly important—from a spiritual and psychological aspect—this distinction to be made.

Briefly, the mind is the rational power by which the man personally and directly communicates with God (the Archetype of good), while the intellect is a secondary function or

tool of the mind by which the man communicates with this world. In the context of this formal distinction, it would be also interesting to elaborate, for example, the question about the intellectual capacity and the gift of illumination.

The food for the mind differs from that of the intellect. In addition, the knowledge of the mind differs from that of the intellect. Food for the mind is the experience and union with God (mystical and prayerful), while food for the intellect is the secular theoretical education (in whatever area of science and culture, even theology, as well as in various skills). The knowledge of the mind is knowledge of God (as illumination or deification), while the knowledge of the intellect in itself is solely knowledge of practical experience in the secular sciences and skills, as well as in culture.

There is a lot to talk about this: what is important for a person? Firstly, by feeding one's intellect (through the senses)—which is simply inevitable in this world—he should simultaneously feed his mind as well (by uniting himself with the uncreated grace), which is of an essential importance for his spiritual development and healing. It is wrong to nurture the intellect all the time and to nurture the mind only from time to time. Secondly, by illuminating of the mind itself—by the uncreated divine light that arises from the purifying of the heart (that is, from the experience in the mind-and-heart prayer, which is a very crucial and rare God's gift for the Church)—there is a real possibility for illumination of the intellect as well.

The Church has a greater benefit from a saint who can record and explain his experience than from a saint who has the very same experience but lacks intellectual capacity to record and explain it, in accordance with contemporary reality. All of the above said has been summarized in three sentences by Elder Sophrony of Essex: "One can be a great scholar, with academic qualifications, and yet remain completely ignorant about the path of salvation. When one lives a holy and sinless life, intellectual knowledge can prove wonderfully fruitful. Contrariwise, knowledge without love cannot save someone."

As it has been mentioned previously, the food for the mind differs from the food for the intellect. First, the mind nurtures itself with

experience of God from which arises knowledge of God; while the intellect first nurtures itself with theoretical knowledge in any area, and from the working experience in the given area, its appropriate knowledge arises. Prayerfully collecting its energy into God—in the heart, the mind comes to knowledge of God and realizes its own primary function. While when scattering its energy through the senses in the world, the mind realizes its secondary function as intellect.

Both functions—either through asceticism or through passionateness—may cause bond or an addiction respectively. However, the bond of mind as love is one thing, and the addiction of the intellect as passion is quite another. The relation as love (with God) is freedom for the human mind, while the addiction as a passion (to anything) is slavery for the human intellect, which becomes second nature of the human mind. This is going to be additionally explained.

As the ascetics (strugglers) speed up the rhythm and intensity of saying the Jesus prayer in order to stop the demonic (automatic) thoughts and to collect prayerfully their mind energy in God—in their hearts, thus the demon tries to speed up their life dynamics and the exchange of information in order to stop the ascetic's Jesus prayer and to scatter and link his mind energy—through his senses or fantasies—to worldly things.

In other words, the ascetic strives towards working of his mind, above all, in its basic function, while the demon strives towards perpetual working of the ascetic's mind in its secondary function—as intellect. By illuminating of the mind, which also entails illumination of the intellect (with the gift of the mind-and-heart prayer), the inner split between the basic function of the mind and its functioning as intellect is finally overcome, and the human personality is healed.

Therefore, it is evident that God and spiritual life cannot be reached, known and correctly explained merely through the functioning of the intellect and the bodily senses, because He is inapproachable to them. For the one who makes an attempt to reach God in such a manner, or the Most Holy Theotokos or *spiritual life*, these will forever remain solely abstract notions or wrongful projections of his own. Consequently, one cannot discover the meaning of his existence only through the in-

tellect and senses. On the other hand, the pointlessness of life is the basic cause for the noogenic neurosis and depression from which almost all the humankind suffers. Hence, the many escapes from such experienced reality into various addictions (power, money, the carnal, alcohol, drugs, the Internet and social networks etc.—there is no end to this list).

Therefore, the communication with this world only through the untransformed intellect and senses turns the world into a heap of dead idols (something about which people think they "depend on," and something about which they are convinced they "cannot" do without—regardless of the fact whether they consciously want this or not). At the same time, it represents correspondingly passionate relation and union with the dead idols of this world—regardless of the forms and names they bear—as well as slavish serving to them instead to the Living God.

In a conclusion, everything (even the closest to man) which is going to be set as a priority in human life by the intellect and the senses—before the excellence of knowledge and union with the Living God—is a dead idol and an impassable obstacle for unity with the Living God. Naturally, he who has no union with God neither has true union with himself, with his fellowman and with the world that surrounds him. Now it should be clear why repentance, that is, the change of mind (the renewal of the basic function of the mind)—as an essential evangelical summon—is a profound existential necessity for a living life in the Catholic Body of the Godman Christ—the Church, and not mere bleak moralism and pietistic décor as is the case with the nominal Christians of today.

The Basic Method

According to the previously said, in the Church the man struggles in a free and love manner in order his mind to act, above all, in its primary function—prayerfully to unite him with God. In fact, this is the basis for repentance. On the contrary, the demon strives man's mind constantly to function in its secondary function as intellect and passionately to unite and attach man (in a slavish manner) to worldly things. The demon's aim is to hold man's mind in this false state or delusion as much as pos-

sible—without the man being aware and without knowing what really happens to him.

Therefore, it is obvious why the original meaning of the word *repentance* is a *change of mind*, or transforming of the energy of the human mind from the outside towards its essence in the heart and in God. Instead of allowing the demon to scatter and waste the mind energy around the world through the intellect and senses, the basic Christian duty is, first, to free the intellect from the many passionate worries about worldly things and from the demonic influence. And second, by struggling in knowledge man should redirect his mind to act, above all, in its primary function—by prayerfully collecting of its energy in God (within the heart)—and constantly to grow in knowledge of God. Without the first, the second is not possible as well.

Which holy virtue enables this struggle to the ascetic? Obedience or more precisely put—placing one's mind into a process of healing under the spiritual guidance of an experienced spiritual father or therapist. The more wholehearted the obedience the less the nourishment for functioning of the mind as intellect, for the passions and the demon related to them, and the greater the space for the realization of the basic function of the mind. That is why the Holy Fathers teach and insist on obedience as a primary struggle in the Church. Obedience is simply a change of mind in practice—concrete repentance. Every other struggle before the realization of this one is futile.

Obedience as a basic struggle is strictly limited—it lasts until the moment of purifying and opening of the heart and the manifestation of the gift of mind-and-heart prayer. By illuminating of the mind and the intellect respectively (with the gift of mind-and-heart prayer), the inner split between the basic function of the mind and its functioning as intellect is finally overcome—and the human personality is healed—which is the primary aim of spiritual healing (therapy). In other words, a new quality or a new level of Orthodox spiritual life takes place, which beside *illumination of the mind* is also termed as *a natural way of existence* by the Church Fathers.

Preconditions for Godlikeness

God and man—if they want to—communicate with each other as persons with their

personal energies. Naturally, in the process of this communication it is God that interpenetrates and constantly transforms the human created energy and essence (nature) with His uncreated energy; and not vice versa.

It may look simple, but it is not as it looks like at first sight. To clarify, it is necessary again to highlight the difference explained previously, the one between the mind and the intellect. Why is it important for the ascetic to make this key difference in the ascetical practice? Moreover, why is it essential for him to pay attention to the way in which he is going to function, that is, when and where he is going to direct his mind energy? Alongside this, when and where he is going to direct his mental and bodily actions as well.

The most essential thing is the mind energy to be directed towards the One True God—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. If it is not directed towards God, then almost certainly—regardless of man's intention—it is directed towards the demons or towards the rest of the rational and irrational creation. Hence, everyone should reexamine himself and decide with whom he is going to enter into communication by directing of his energy—whether with the created or with the Uncreated. The consequences are entirely different. The same choice applies to the atheists as well. With the previously described action, the first commandment of God may be fulfilled: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

Nothing less important is the same energy to be correctly directed while the mind works in its secondary function as intellect. Everyone is faced with the following choice: whether he is going to direct his energy towards fulfilling God's commandments or towards satisfying his passions. The latter choice may look simple at first sight as well, but it is essentially dependent on the former. With the previously described action, the second commandment of God may be fulfilled: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," but at the same time "be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

In the latter case, additional attention is necessary: not only whether the actions are in accordance with God's commandments, but also whether once fulfilled, they are done to the

glory of God or to the glory of oneself. For the Orthodox Christians only what has been done in obedience to the Church is considered as done to the glory of God. In addition, the more one comes to knowledge of God by fulfilling His commandments the more precisely and powerfully his mind energy is directed towards Him. Simply, the one is not possible without the other.

According to the Orthodox Christian Psychotherapy, without the reconciled activity of the primary and secondary function of the mind, which comprises the healing of the mind, the development of the human personality and the realization of one's personal identity are not possible.

Normally, not everything is black and white as it has been elaborated, but this is the best way to grasp its meaning because, after all, it all comes down to that. However, here is a divergent example: it may happen one not to believe—or more or less to believe in a wrong manner—but on the other hand, he may fulfill God's commandments to a certain extent, regardless whether he is aware or unaware of it. There is a belief that before God this is much better, and the one who acts in such a way is closer to find God than the one who properly confesses his faith verbally, but his deeds are not in accordance with God's example.

Communication with God and fulfilling God's commandments are established by the means of His grace or energy. Man should only want and try, and God fulfills. As it has been mentioned at the beginning, in this synergy between God and man in the Church, the secret of the deification of man is comprised, that is, the secret and fullness of life in the Eschaton—*already and not yet*.

Conclusion

Contemporary religious psychology sets a new goal—man is not to be regarded merely as a biological or a psychological being. The subject matter of research is the human being as a whole, as a spiritual person that is characterized by independence, regarding the biological and psychological processes. Religious feelings are not something accidental or a mere reflection of the industrial and social relations—they rather have a certain meaning within the entire system of the person, in the general *hierarchy of values* in the life of each person. Moreover, the personal spiritual sphere

is not considered as the only factor but is specifically related both to the mental and biological sphere.

Contemporary religious psychology recognizes the dialectic and dynamic relationship with God as one of the most important dimensions of the human personality. In the basis of this science, all layers of personality should be taken into account: the somatic, the vital, the psychological and the spiritual ones in their mutual relations. Moreover, it does not analyze only the objectively registered psychological manifestations or reactions of a person but also experiences, such as goodness, reverence, love, remorse, shame, the feeling of inevitable perdition, the meaning of *myself*, the meaning of life etc.

The importance of understanding the spiritual level of human existence enables holistic approach and experiencing of the human personality as a whole. Furthermore, it offers new perspectives of psychotherapeutic action not only within the range of the classical psychotherapeutic modalities (for instance, Existential Psychotherapy, Spiritual Transactional Analysis, Integrative Psychotherapy, and Mindfulness—Based Cognitive Therapy), but also within the range of the applied Orthodox Psychotherapy.

GLOSSARY

Ascesis

Ascesis is man's struggle to keep the commandments of Christ. It encompasses not only his bodily and spiritual effort, but also the method by which he passes through the three levels of the spiritual life, namely: *purification of the heart*, *illumination of the mind*, and *deification*.

Cenobite, cenobium

Cenobites are monastics who live together in a cenobitic monastery or cenobium, that is, a monastery where all things are held in common.

Deification

Connected with the vision of uncreated Light, deification is a participation in the uncreated grace of God. At this level of perfection, one has reached dispassion. Through the cooperation of God with man, deification is attained through the action of the transfigurative grace of God.

Heart

In patristic usage, the heart is both spiritual and physical. The spiritual heart is located in the physical heart as an organ which is man's natural, paranatural and supernatural center, and it is the path for the mind to return to the spiritual heart.

Hesychia

The term "hesychia" can mean either external stillness or internal, noetic stillness. "Hesychia" in the ascetical practice of noetic stillness linked with *watchfulness* and deepened by the unceasing *Jesus prayer*. Hesychia is an undisturbed *nous* and a *heart* with peace, and from influences of the environment. It is dwelling in God. The only way man to achieve deification is through hesychia.

Illumination

Closely connected with *mind-and-heart prayer*, illumination of the mind occurs when the *heart* is purified from the *passions*, the mind returns within the heart, and the prayer operates unceasingly.

Inner voice

St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite explains the "inner voice" or "inner reason" in this manner: "Once you have brought your *nous* into the heart, it should not just stay there, looking and doing nothing, but should find reason, that is, the inner voice of the heart through which we think, compose essays, make judgments, analyze, and read whole books silently, without saying a single word with the mouth."

Intellect

It means the reason of man, that is, his discursive, conceptualizing, and logical faculty of conscious thinking and cogitation. It draws conclusions and formulates concepts from information either obtained by revelation or by the senses.

Jesus prayer

The Jesus prayer is a short prayer which is continually repeated, usually consisting of the words: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me."

Knowledge

Through the process of deification, man attains to a knowledge of a higher order than

any human knowledge and beyond any other natural knowledge. It is neither an intellectual speculation about God nor knowledge about God, but it stems from personal experience of God, first through undistracted prayer accompanied by peace and love of God or joyous mourning, and later by means of vision of His uncreated light.

Mind-and-heart prayer

Mind-and-heart prayer is prayer done with the mind without distraction within the *heart*. It is the highest form of prayer in which the mind is kept in the heart by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Mourning

It means godly mourning, caused by grace and gives rise to repentance and sometimes tears. Godly mourning, as well as "joyous sadness," has a positive effect on the soul, bringing it peace and a determination to struggle harder to live a Christian way of life. Merely human mourning, though, is a destructive sorrow that leads one to despair and causes psychological and psychosomatic abnormalities.

Passion

A passion is a spiritual disease that dominates the soul. When one repeatedly falls into a certain sin, it becomes second nature—a passion—for him to keep falling into this sin. Thus, one who misuses the God-given powers of the soul of desire and anger, or one who continually succumbs to temptations of lust, hate, malice, or jealousy, or one who succumbs to pride and vainglory acquires those passions. It is primarily through obedience to an experienced spiritual father that one is cleansed or healed of the passions.

Passionate

The word "passionate" in this text is not used in any of the secular senses of the word, but is used to describe someone or something subject to the *passions*.

Patristic

This adjective is used to describe something of, or relating to, the Holy Fathers of the Church.

Purification

In *Patristic Theology*, purification refers to three states: (1) the rejection from the heart of all *thoughts*, (2) the ascetical effort by which the three powers of the soul are returned towards God, thereby moving in accordance with and above nature, and (3) the ascetical method by which man overcomes selfish love and achieves unselfish love.

Repentance

It does not mean merely regret or contrition, but it literally means a "change of mind" through which one directs his entire life towards God.

Skete

A skete is a small monastic village, usually consisting of a central church and several huts or "cells."

Thoughts

In patristic usage, "thoughts" refers not merely to thoughts in the ordinary sense, but also to evil thoughts provoked by the demons.

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Резиме

ОСНОВИ НА АСКЕТСКАТА (ХРИСТИЈАНСКА) ПСИХОТЕРАПИЈА

Наум Илиевски, митрополит струмички

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Очигледно е дека човекот на денешницата страда. Тие страдања честопати изгледаат бесмислени и беспричински. Модерната наука сè повеќе открива и потврдува дека човековите страдања се психосоматски. Во повеќето случаи, тоа се ноогени неврози. Тие не потекнуваат од психолошка, туку од ноолошка или духовна димензија на човековата егзистенција. Бесмислата на животот е основната причина за ноогената невроза и депресијата, од кои е опфатено човештвото. Оттука произлегуваат и разните бегства од реалноста која е така доживеана во разни зависимости. Најдобар пат кон исцеление е враќање на смислата на живеењето, засилување на „волјата за смисла“. Религијата отсекогаш била и останала силна, привлечна цел која го исполнува животот и битието на секој човек. Овој труд ја покажува систематизацијата на духовниот развој на личноста, прикажана во табелата на хармонијата на аскетско-исихастичкиот подвиг, според којашто секој може да го пронајде местото на кое се наоѓа на скалата од духовниот развој, и да го освести и усогласи начинот на личен подвиг согласно со својот духовен развој. Клучно е усогласувањето на примарната функција на умот со неговата секундарна функција – разумот. Современата религиозна психологија не го сведува човекот само на биолошко или психичко постоење. Предмет на истражување е човекот како целина, како духовна личност која се одликува со автономност во однос на биолошките и психичките процеси. Значењето на разбирањето на духовното ниво на човековата егзистенција овозможува холистички пристап и доживување на човековата личност како целина, и отвора нови перспективи на психотерапевтско дејствување, не само во рамките на класичните психотерапевтски модалитети туку и во рамките на применетата христијанска психотерапија.

Клучни зборови: ноогена невроза, усогласување на начинот на живот со степенот на духовниот развој, аскетско-исихастички подвиг, исцеление.