Why Christians Need Freud

Preoccupation with animals, especially canines, is a well-known disorder from which I have suffered all of my life. To date I have not located this Disorder in the DSM, but I am certain that it will make DSM-6. Most probably it will be called Canine Disruptive Disorder. For an extended time I ran treeing Walker hounds. A uniquely-American breed tailored for hunting raccoons, bobcats, fox, and mountain lions, they may be a little short on conventional canine grey matter, but they make up for it in courage, stamina, and the ability to climb trees. Two of these remarkable hounds, A. J. and the Bandit, were my companions at Southeastern Seminary. Bandit did counseling with me specializing in house calls to the dorms. A. J. was not much on counseling, preferring the role of prophet.

One day walking through the campus, the dogs spotted a squirrel and pursued. A visiting family on campus missed the first part of the chase, but their seven-year-old son called attention to it upon discovering that the dogs had climbed the tree after the squirrel. “Look Daddy, there is a dog in that tree,” squealed the little boy with excitement. Well, a father knows best, and he certainly knew that dogs do not climb trees. With a facial expression resembling an Atlantic hurricane the father informed the little fellow that, “If you do not stop dropping whoppers like that, I am going to wash your mouth out with detergent and warm your bottom to an unholy temperature.” That was my cue. “Sir,” I said, “would you glance in the direction of the chapel and tell me what that is in the tree?” It would be inappropriate here to tell you precisely what this pre-seminarian uttered next, but I will tell you that he likely would not have said it in your church.
Perhaps no blame should be assigned to this man. After all, he was guilty only of an exaggerated confidence in the “common core” of public wisdom that would surely have argued that it is not scientifically possible for dogs to climb trees.

Little harm is done by believing that common core of wisdom regarding dogs and trees unless you happen to be a threatened little boy with a penchant for truth. But there is a “common core” of “wisdom” about the mental health industry in America that is exceedingly troubling. The tenacity with which it holds the public despite numerous skeptical books written from within its big pharmaceutical, multi-billion-dollar empire is more tenacious than the bite of my Walker hounds.

Peter Gotzsche focuses attention on the nature of the problem in his perceptive book, *Deadly Medicines and Organized Crime: How Big Pharma has Corrupted Healthcare* when he notes:

> If we treat patients with depression in primary care with an antidepressant drug for 6 weeks, about 60% of them will improve. This seems like a good effect. However, if we treat the patients with a blinded placebo that looks just the same as the active pill, 50% of them will improve. Most doctors interpret this as a large placebo effect, but it isn’t possible to interpret the result in this way. If we don’t treat the patients at all, but just see them again after 6 weeks, many of them will also have improved. We call this the spontaneous remission of the disease or its natural course.\(^1\)

William Epstein, in the *Illusion of Psychotherapy* is even less guarded when he says:

> The voice of science in the psychotherapy community is weak, lacking any apparent influence over the quality of its research or the depth of its self-scrutiny. The scholarship of psychotherapy more resembles the intensely censored communication of cults than the open, direct, and tough cross-examining challenges that define intellectual exchanges between scholars committed to the

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canons of science. The field’s poor research masks patient deterioration and protects its communal interests at the expense of the broader civic culture. Critical thought itself seems to have largely abandoned the therapeutic enterprise.²

Tana Dineen borrows the analogy of E. Fuller Torrey in his book *Witchdoctors and Psychiatrists*:

Torrey once described psychology as “the world’s second oldest profession, remarkably similar to the first. Both involve a contract (implicit or explicit) between a specialist and a client for a service, and for this service a fee is paid.” Both professions shape themselves and their services to fit the wishes and feelings of their clients, to make them feel better in body or in mind, but the underlying goal is to do what ever has to be done in order to make a living. “Give the customer what he wants” is the motto, whether it is the pleasure of sex, the benefits of strong workers and soldiers, the thrill of self-actualization, or the blamelessness of victimhood. In this liaison, American society has abandoned its moral and cultural tradition while psychology has lost its soul and neglected, even scorned, its own scientific foundation.³

But the purpose of this paper is not to call psychology to repentance even though I suspect that this is needed. I would exhort the practitioners of psychology and psychiatry to acknowledge their indebtedness to the atheistic philosophies of B. F. Skinner and Sigmund Freud, confess the limitations of scientific foundation upon which they are constructed, and admit the degree to which the acquisition of money has motivated conclusions for what is one of the “soft sciences.” If psychology lay prone on my office couch, lamenting the fact that he had become dysfunctional and felt somewhat unnerved by all this, I think that I would counsel “truth therapy.” Just tell the truth and you will feel better.


The purpose of this verbal adventure is to argue that the church should not abandon its birthright for a bowl of red psychotherapeutic pottage. Though I suspect that one can read the DSM-5 with the same profit obtained from a reading of Bulfinch’s *Mythology*, I will leave the whole discussion of the reliability of the psychotherapeutic industry to better minds than my own.\(^4\) What I do intend to attempt is to reassert that the ministry of counseling or pastoral ministries is still the task given to the church and cannot be abandoned without infinite spiritual devastation to the body of Christ.

**The Basis for Biblical Counseling**

Four fundamental truths set the stage for Christian counseling. Though none of this will be a revelation to any of you, I do hope to arrange the information in such a way as to underscore in a fresh way the authority and the confidence of the counselor. First, Christian counseling is predicated on the doctrine of creation. Genesis 1:1 declares that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Arguably, that is the most important verse in the Bible. If that is not the case, then you are of all persons most miserable since listening to this lecture is, by definition, the most inordinate waste of time in which you could indulge. However, if the verse is accurate, then it follows that the world belongs to God, and His purposes in creation cannot be abridged without generating unhappiness and frustration in relation to both our Creator and His creation. Failure to discern the purpose and follow the intention of the Creator is construed as moral failure.

\(^4\) I have included at the end of this paper a bibliography of cogent publications which is annotated for your convenience. This bibliography consists of books on psychology, psychiatry, and pharmacology.
B.F. Skinner rejected this hypothesis, and most psychology follows him in this disavowal. He says:

Almost everyone makes ethical and moral judgments but this does not mean that the human species has “an inborn need or demand for ethical standards.” (We could say as well that it has an inborn need or demand for unethical behavior, since almost everyone behaves unethically at some time or other.) Man has not evolved as an ethical or moral animal. He has evolved to the point at which he has constructed an ethical or moral culture. He differs from the other animals not in possessing a moral or ethical sense but in having been able to generate a moral or ethical social environment.⁵

And Skinner is certainly correct. If there is no Creator, then there is no morality, only socially-agreed-upon convention, which will differ from one social order to the next.

In her scintillating monograph *Malpsychia*, Joyce Milton cites two examples of the destination of such thinking. She recounts the incident when Abe Maslow was speaking and openly espoused the abolition of churches and synagogues with some sort of “religious surrogate.” A largely Roman Catholic audience received him warmly with only one lonely nun asking penetrating questions. Of this experience, Maslow wrote, “They shouldn’t applaud me—they should attack. If they were fully aware of what I was doing, they would.”⁶ Milton points here not only to Maslow’s purpose but also to the credulity of the contemporary audience.

A second case is that of Carl Rogers, the father of Rogerian technique in counseling. Roger’s wife, Helen, bore him two children and stood faithfully by him at every step. In her senior years she was ill and needed his assistance. Rogers complained in a public meeting that

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his wife’s love for him had turned into a “clinging love,” which he found objectionable.

Explaining his dilemma Rogers said:

If I give up my life or my personhood to take care of her, then I’m going to become bitter. I’m going to become angry inside at what I’ve given up. I’m not going to want to be with her—it would be out of a sense of duty—and that isn’t the kind of relationship I want. It isn’t the kind of relationship she would appreciate either, though she might think now that she would.7

These are the attitudes of those who accept neither the Creator nor His purpose in the earth. While there is much left to explain in human behavior, Freud taught his followers how to fog the atmosphere with pseudo-scientific jargon. Attempting to explain how conscience developed, Freud says in Totem and Taboo:

Conscience is the internal perception of the rejection of a particular wish operating within us. The stress, however, is upon the fact that this rejection has no need to appeal to anything else for support, that it is quite “certain of itself.” This is even clearer in the case of consciousness of guilt—the perception of the internal condemnation of an act by which we have carried out a particular wish. To put forward any reason for this would seem superfluous: anyone who has a conscience must feel within him the justification for the condemnation, must feel the self-reproach for the act that has been carried out. This same characteristic is to be seen in the savage’s attitude towards taboo. It is a command issued by conscience; and violation of it produces a fearful sense of guilt which follows as a matter of course and of which the origin is unknown.8

In stating this he totally misses that the Greek word suneidesis actually means “know together with,” implying that conscience is the product of the mind of man with the law of God or the presence of God or both.

Accounting for the existence of morality or the presence of conscience provides some of the most difficult sledding for Darwinians. H. G. Wells claimed a bit too much when he

7Ibid., 157.
suggested that Darwin destroyed the doctrine of the fall of man and unraveled the whole fabric of Christianity – without the fall there is no redemption and without redemption there is no Christianity. But he was certainly correct in identifying the Darwinian intention.

The creation account of Genesis 1–3, if true, provides the following information. God created all that has existence (Col 1:17). In so doing, God had a purpose and in that purpose humans – made in the *imago dei* – find meaning, significance, and happiness when and only when they are conformed to His will. Disastrously, men asserted their own wills in the place of God’s will. This caused disruption of fellowship with God and is called sin. Not only did sin cause a breach in fellowship with God, but it is also the ultimate cause of the sufferings in human life. This lamentable state of affairs, however, can be countered by a combination of three events in the life of a believer.

The first event is called regeneration. This occurs at the moment a man repents of his sin and places faith in Christ. The Greek word *palingenesia* occurs only twice in the New Testament. The first occurrence is in Matthew 19:28 and references cosmic regeneration forecast for the *eschaton*. The second occurrence is in Titus 3:5 and refers to personal redemption. But the concept occurs with other terminology such as the discussion of the new birth in John 3. First Peter 1 speaks of the new birth, attributing this new state of affairs to the power of the resurrection of Christ. The word regeneration actually means “to become again” and nullifies the effects of the fall. Somehow God acts to create a new man. The regenerate man is not yet perfected. Shadows of his former life often darken his way a bit, but in the end he is

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still a new man. Something profound has happened to him, and he no longer sees with eyes of shame and guilt, but with the sober vision of forgiveness.

In his revealing book, *Unhinged*, psychiatrist Daniel Carlat puts on parade the series of events that led him to question the accepted path of psychiatry. He tells the story of David Foster Wallace, for example. This brilliant novelist with a cult-like following attempted every form of psychological cure available. One night, left at home by himself, he could stand it no longer and hung himself. Carlat, a pensive variety, saw too much. Reflecting on all of this he recognized that many carried problems that contemporary psychiatry could not help.¹⁰ There remains a need for someone or something that can overcome the past and give new existence.

Allen Francis, chair of the DSM-4 Task Force, found himself in a similar dilemma and wrote in his monograph *Saving Normal*:

> Billions of research dollars have failed to produce convincing evidence that any mental disorder is a discrete disease entity with a unitary cause. Dozens of different candidate genes have been “found,” but in follow-up studies each turned out to be fool’s gold. Mental disorders are too heterogeneous in presentation and in causality to be considered simple diseases; instead each of our currently defined disorders will eventually turn out to be many different diseases. For now at least, Umpire One has been called out on strikes.¹¹

How could such a respected psychiatrist arrive at such a devastating conclusion? If he is right, then the need for a supernatural intervention called the new birth is the only answer.

Armed with a grasp of God’s purpose in creation and protected by the regenerating prowess of the new birth, the Christian counselor may add to his arsenal the permanent and

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sanctioning indwelling of the Holy Spirit. First Corinthians 6:19 declares, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?” This remarkable affirmation is more startling than it appears on the surface. The word for temple is not hieron (Greek), the whole temple complex, but naos (Greek), the Holy of Holies where God dwells. That God through the Holy Spirit takes up a position in the body of the believer is most amazing. He becomes the captain of the soul and unleashes all the authority of the godhead on behalf of a compliant believer. Freud saw these powers as meaningless and once again, so did the vast majority of his offspring. In Moses and Monotheism, Freud notes that:

> Psychoanalytic research is in any case the subject of suspicious attention from Catholocism. I do not maintain that this suspicion is unmerited. If our research leads us to a result that reduces religion to the status of a neurosis of mankind and explains its grandiose powers in the same way as we should a neurotic obsession in our individual patients, then we may be sure we shall incur in this country the greatest resentment of the powers that be.\(^\text{12}\)

> This indwelling of the Spirit means that while the psychiatrist and the pharmacologist must approach the counselee from the outside attempting to penetrate the mysteries of the neuro-psychological system with theories that are often wrong and of little certainty, the Holy Spirit works from within knowing both the mind of the believer and the mind of God. From this position, He is able to produce the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness and kindness, all of which drug-wielding psychiatrists only long to accomplish.

Admittedly, if the counselee is not a believer, then this ultimate weapon is not available as a resource. Even in this case, however, the Holy Spirit is actively convicting of sin, of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:8). The one seeking aid may not be regenerate, but he

still has the witness of creation and the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. A wise counselor will be cognizant of this and build on the work of the Spirit toward evangelization.

God has graciously provided one final formidable weapon to guide both counselor and counselee. God has revealed the mind of the Lord in the sacred text that we call the Bible. You are biblical counselors and know infinitely more about this ministry than a wandering theologian. But may I today stir up your pure minds by reminding you of the extent and value of knowing and using the Bible. Moses has just extended the baton to Joshua who has already been running for a while. But God speaks now urging three times that Joshua be strong and of good courage. Specifically, Joshua is to be strong in that he is to observe all of the Law, which Moses delivered. He is not to allow the Law of God to depart from his mouth. He is to meditate on this Law and observe to do it (Joshua 1:5-9). He must observe the law, meditate on the law, and keep the law close. Can you imagine a better description of a biblical counselor?

All Scripture is God-exhaled and is therefore profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. Through Scripture, the man of God is equipped for all good works (1 Timothy 3:15-17). We are to desire it like new born babes desire milk so that we may experience spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:2). But, someone will object, there are many things that the Bible does not address. There is no word about the profitability of the Word for the sport of bull riding but there is a fair amount about wisdom, which might suggest staying off the bull altogether. In any event, the Word of God prepares you for everything.

The wisdom of Proverbs provides counsel on most areas of life. Job’s friends provide counsel to him that is more often than not true. But because it is offered with wrong motives and misapplication to him, it is useless or harmful. Often conceived as a book that only helps with
Job’s particular dilemma, this important aspect of counseling requiring discernment and proper motivation is an added value in Job.

If I may be permitted a personal reflection and confession, as a youth, I had a problem with anger. I still have a problem with anger. What changed radically in my own life as a result of the reading of God’s Word was my understanding of that anger. What I initially interpreted as righteous indignation, I have come to understand as chutzpah and pride. What I needed was Hermes to right my interpretation. But I had something better. Through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit within, augmented by verses including, “The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God” and “Therefore let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger,” I was able to determine that anger was just my favorite form of sin and was the reason for my unhappiness. Stories like that of Joseph and Ruth taught me to trust the providence of God rather than my own ruthlessness. Doubtless I will struggle with this all my life, but I will never again suggest even to myself that God is pleased with or ambivalent to this behavior. And as I overcome and trust Him alone for justice and mercy, life’s quality and fulfillment increase exponentially.

Gary Greenberg, a Connecticut psychotherapist penned a volume called The Book of Woe. The subtitle is The DSM and the UNMAKING of Psychiatry. Like many others, Greenberg dissembled the DSM. After 2000 years of efforts to do the same for the Bible, the Word of God stands triumphant over its enemies.

My purpose here has not been to deliver a definitive judgment against the psychotherapeutic industry. It is evident that I believe America and much of the world has

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bought into a legend and paid a great amount of money for its purchase. But I leave the
adjudication of that to God who alone can judge such things. Rather, my purpose is to call the
church to do what it can do.

We cannot dispense drugs. We do not have the competence to make decisions in the
world of neuroscience. But we do have the Word of God, and we know from experience that
whenever people follow its dictates, they live happy and meaningful lives and handle stress with
great emotional and mental dexterity. If there are exceptions to that, they are so infrequent that
they should not interdict biblical counseling. Therefore, I conclude with this challenge to our
churches and to our schools. Read Freud, Skinner, and all of their followers as philosophy and
not as science – interesting but hardly determinative. Attempt finding all the answers to human
problems in God’s Word, for Jesus Christ is the Word. Teach the attitudes of the heart that
change a man. Honor God in all things. This is our contribution to the beginning of revival in
the churches.

On October 31, we will celebrate the posting of Martin Luther’s 95 theses and
consequently the beginning of the Reformation. Recently, an increasing number of scholars
have become aware of the amazing presence of a people who suffered profoundly – the
Anabaptists. These Christians not only embraced sola scriptura, but also they lived by the Bible.

Listen to the praise of their enemies:

Among the existing heretical sects there is none which in appearance leads a more
modest or pious life than the Anabaptist. As concerns their outward public life
they are irreproachable. No lying, deception, swearing, strife, harsh language, no
intemperate eating and drinking, no outward personal display, is found among
them, but humility, patience, uprightness, neatness, honesty, temperance,
straightforwardness in such measure that one would suppose that they had the
Holy Spirit of God. (Franz Agricola)
I frankly confess that in most [Anabaptists] there is in evidence piety and consecration and indeed a zeal which is beyond any suspicion of insincerity. For what earthly advantage could they hope to win by enduring exile, torture, and unspeakable punishment of the flesh? I testify before God that I cannot say that on account of a lack of wisdom they are somewhat indifferent toward earthly things, but rather from divine motives. (Capito)  

Hear Savanorola, a precursor to the Reformation, moments before he was hung and consigned to the flames:

Bring it on, the excommunication, bring it in on a spear. I know that there are those in Rome who are toiling against me night and day, but O Lord, this is what I desire. I crave only your cross, make me to be persecuted. I ask you this grace; that you do not let me die in my bed.

‘I separate thee,’ pronounced the turncoat bishop, ‘from the church militant and triumphant!’

Unable to keep silent, Savonarola replied, ‘Militant, not triumphant, for you have no power to separate me from the church triumphant to which I go.’

With a final sneer, the hangman checked the noose and gave a mighty heave. Savonarola fell. The noose did its work. He died instantly.

Listen to Jakob Hutter as he faces his demise:

The priests, in their evil, vindictive passion, thought they would try to drive the devil out of him. So they had him dipped in ice-cold water and then taken into a hot room, where he was beaten with rods. They lacerated his body, poured brandy into the wounds, then set fire to it and let it burn. They tied his hands and feet and gagged him again so that he could not denounce their wickedness. Then they put a plumed hat on his head and took him into the house of their idols, because they knew how much he detested it. So they mocked and ridiculed him in every way they could think of.

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16 Ibid, p. 135.
A heroic fighter for Christ, he was unwavering in his faith. Therefore he was sentenced to death. After suffering much at the hands of evil men, the brood of Caiaphas and Pilate, he was burned alive at the stake.

As he was being led to the fire he said, “Now come here, all you disputers, and let us prove our faith in the fire. This fire will not harm my soul any more than the fiery furnace harmed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.”

Those who had desperate need of Freud and Skinner found Jesus and the Bible totally satisfactory in the hour of greatest need. May we do the same.

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Bibliography


Annotated Bibliography


This former teaching fellow at Harvard Medical School and consultant with the National Institute of Mental Health has been writing for years sounding a warning about psychiatric treatment and the use of medications and their value or harm. This text is one of many and accompanies a voluminous website found at www.breggin.com.


Carlat, a Harvard-trained psychiatrist, reveals the risks of the “popular” psychiatric diagnoses and the “cocktails” of medications that are prescribed to treat them. He also reveals the inner workings of “collusion” between psychiatrists and drug companies.


Everyone is a victim. The public has a broad awareness of this problem in psychology, but the extent of the difficulty is made evident in Dineen’s book, an essential read. Both causes and consequences of the effects of “victimology” are elucidated by Dineen.


The former Chair of the DSM-4 committee reveals how the new edition of the DSM will turn our current diagnostic inflation into hyperinflation by converting millions of “normal” people into “mental patients.” In addition, Frances gives a historical review of “psychiatric fads” that have driven treatment.


At the time of publication, Glenmullen was a clinical instructor in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. In this text, Glenmullen calls into question the overuse of psychiatric medications and the useful alternative treatments that bring questions to the standard understanding of the etiology of the diagnoses.

Gotzsche attempts to expose the pharmaceutical industries and their “charade of fraudulent behaviour, both in research and marketing where the morally repugnant disregard for human lives is the norm.” His effort is to reveal the truth behind efforts to confuse and distract the public and their politicians.


Greenberg reveals the history of the growth, size and influence of the DSM. His thesis is to demonstrate how the use of this manual turns suffering into a commodity and the APA into its own biggest beneficiary.


Kirsch reveals how he spent years referring patients to psychiatrists to have their depression treated with drugs. However, with 15 years of research, he demonstrates that what everyone “knew” about antidepressants is wrong—what the medical community considered a cornerstone of psychiatric treatment is little more than a faulty consensus.


“Impatient with human limitations, intent of putting the self at the center of the universe, the humanistic psychology movement was momentarily triumphant. But as Joyce Milton reveals, the movement’s questing selves eventually created a culture of narcissism; the new values were exposed as clichés in disguise; and the gospel of self-esteem dwindled into psychobabble.”


Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mental Health Sciences at University College London and practicing psychiatrist Joanna Moncrieff challenges the accepted account that portrays antipsychotics as specific treatments that target an underlying disease or chemical imbalance.


Moncrieff attempts to expose the view that psychiatric drugs target underlying diseases as a fraud. She traces this view historically and suggests that it was adopted, not because there was evidence to support
the view but because it served the interests of the psychiatric profession.


Peele documents the scientific fallacies of the “addiction-as-disease” movement. In his view, the disease model sets up the sufferer for future irresponsibility, which leads to relapse and retards personal growth.


The editors attempt to demonstrate faulty thinking in the contemporary mental health landscape and to pose possible solutions to the continuing problem of emotional distress and disturbance.


In this 50+ year-old text, Szasz reveals a theory of human conduct in which mental diseases do not exist in the sense in which bodily diseases exist, and man is considered to be always responsible for his acts. At the time of writing, his thesis seemed odd and controversial to many, but in light of the other texts in the bibliography, his writing is timely.


This internationally-known neuropsychiatrist argues that the mentally ill are no longer receiving the care they need. He details how psychiatrists rely too heavily on the DSM, and how it neglects important conditions and symptoms, which leads to an improper diagnosis of patients’ conditions.


Science and history writer Robert Whitaker investigates a medical mystery: Why has the number of mentally ill dramatically increased over the past two decades? The author reveals how other societies have begun to alter their use of psychiatric medications and are now reporting much improved outcomes. His question is: Why can’t such a change happen in the United States?