

# *A comparative Analysis of Islamic and Christian Psychotherapies*

*Kianoosh Hashemian, Ph.D.*

Dept. of psychology, Azzahra University, vanak, Tehran, Iran

## **Abstract**

In the earliest societies, the responsibility for all types of healing resided with the religious leaders of the community. It is only in the past few decades that there has been a rapprochement, with an increasing interest in the way in which religious experience and psychotherapy interact.

**However as knowlekghe of psychotherapy increased, knowledge about religious experience by therapists did not keep pace.**

**Religious Counseling suggests that the use of pray, Confession, Penitence and biblical consepts can lead to a higher level of moral thinking. In Islam and Christianity one of the main theme is a need for forgiveness for one's sinfulness act or guiltfeeling .**

**Christian psychotherapy uses as its base the concept of the nature of man and the teaching about conflict resolution and behavioral control that are found in the Bible. In Islamic religion which is followed by Koran, in the part of "Mankind" one can see these Concepts in verses: 2 (nature of man), 3( conflict resolution) and 4 (behavioral control).**

**In Islam and Christianity health being considered as " Wholeness " or "Sanctification" with a transcendental experience ( Salvation). To reach to this goal client needs to use three kinds of psychotherapies: Depth-Insight (biblical study and interpretation), Direct Learning (be told through knowledgable theologian) and Immediate Experiencing (praying and rituals).**

**In both types of psychotherapies we have to recognize that the "Present" is viewed through the "Past" in anticipation of the future. The objective reality of the patient's present situation must be examined in order to determine the significance of the subjectively remembered past. After the therapist and patient have examined their findings in the light of the biblical ideas, it is then easier to change behavior from disturbed to healthy behavior .**

**Both Islamic and Christian psychotherapies can be useful for substance abusers, alcoholics and neurotics.**

## ***Introduction***

There are close links between morality and religion. Indeed for most of human history the two were not really separated. Religion was thought to provide the authority for moral rules, which were backed by the possibility for divine punishment, in this world or the next. The experience of moral commands was one of the arguments for the existence of God. Religious leaders were the main source of moral laws, such as the Ten Commandments.

Religion and morality now appear to be distinct spheres: religion is about our relation with God, and carrying out religious rituals and observing taboos, morality is about relations with other people and with society. However, religion is also about our relationships with each other, and these are usually central parts of religious obligations.

In the earliest societies, the responsibility for all types of healing resided with the religious leaders of the community (Pattison, 1990). There was a gradual separation of religious and psychological issues, and, for a while there was considerable antipathy between the two groups. It is only in the past few decades that there has been a rapprochement, with an increasing interest in the ways in which religious experience and psychotherapy interact.

From all of the definitions were given for religion, three key elements surface: religion (1)" as a cultural component, (2)" as a vehicle for the development of spiritual experiences, and (3)" as a particular perspective from which to understand reality" (Stricker and Gold, 1993).

Religion and psychotherapy are distinct fields now. However as knowledge of psychotherapy increased, knowledge about religious experience by therapists did not keep pace. Even today there still exists a lack of understanding about religious experience. Religious experiences such as mysticism or zen monasticism and..... are a complex phenomenon, and is too often oversimplified. Begin (1983) argues for a nuanced approach to understanding the complexity of religious experience.

What is meant by morality is valuing and seeking certain goals rather than others, obeying certain rules, being able to resist temptations,

and being able to make moral judgements. There are usually guilt feelings (inner punishment) when people fail to resist temptations, they feel inside themselves that they have fallen short (Argyle, M.2000.P167).

It seems that moral rules are needed in all human societies, that they all have them, and pass on to later generations. The question is, how far are they the same rules and are they universal or arbitrary?

According to Argyle (2000), historically religion has been the origin of moral rules and principles in nearly all cultures, and provided sanctions for keeping them. Different societies and religions have arrived at very similar moral ideas. Religious prophets and leaders have discovered them, and religion has provided one of the main sanctions for keeping them. However, a more developed view is that moral principles should be followed because they are right, not for rewards or punishment. It is part of human nature to realize that it is wrong to cause others to suffer, and it is part of the nature of human society to need the basic rules of conduct.

It seems religions reinforce natural moral tendencies, and motivate people to follow them, or it may lead to a higher standard of moral behavior or insight in some ways.

Morals develop up to a point without religion, since there is some biological basis for moral behavior, through the concern for kin and through an unlearned tendency to empathize with those in distress (Hamilton, 1964. Dawkins, 1967. Argyle and Henderson, 1985. Harris, 1989. Mussen et al., 1990. Batson, 1995).

Social learning, from parents and others, is more important, and also gives rise to guilt feeling (Whiting and Child, 1953. Bandura and Walters, 1963. Hoffman and Salzstein, 1967. Bandura, 1967 and Mussen et al., 1990).

Some kinds of childhood experience have been found to enhance the development of morality, such as being responsible for younger siblings or being at a school run on very democratic lines is another (Kohlberg and Higgins, 1987).

Religion can affect moral behavior via fear of punishment. It can provide a guide to life from following religious models, therefore giving

purpose in life, and following religious models, but religious education has weak effects (Argyle, 2000). Religious Counseling adds the use of prayer and confession or penitence, and biblical concepts can lead to a higher level of moral thinking.

In many religions one of the main there is that when one is being aware of his/her sinfulness, then there is a need for forgiveness. Religious individuals may feel that God is watching them, and will punish them. Guilt feelings can be relieved by conversion, confession, penitence and regular religious rituals based on sacrifice and atonement. Through clinical observation and experience, it has been show that, psychopaths often inflict great suffering another people, but have no feelings of guilt at all. Neurotic introverts have much stronger guilt feelings, especially if they are female, middle-class, were strictly brought up. Or belong to fundamentalist groups (Argyle, 2000).

### ***Definition***

By definition, according to william p. Willson (1972) christian psychotherapy is a therapy that uses as its base the concept of the nature of man and the teachings about conflict resolution and behavioral control that are found in the Bible (Herink, 1980).

In Koran on the part of “Mankind” in some verses we well see these concepts:

*Verse 1.* Has there come on mankind a while of time when he was a thing unremembered?

*Verse 2.* We created man of a sperm-drop, amingling, trying him, and we made him hearing and seeing.(Nature of man).

*Verse 3.* Surely we guided him on the way, whether he be thankful or unthankful.(Conflict resolution).

*Verse 4.* Surely we have prepared for the unbelievers chains, fetters and a Blaze.(Behavioral Control).

*Verse 7.* They fulfill their vows, and fear a day whose evil is wide- spreading.

## **History**

Although Pastoral Counseling has been performed since the beginning of the christian church, it has been areal concern of the church only during the last few decades. Because there was no historical precedent for the development of a discipline that began with a distinctive christian base, secular concepts have been seen as sufficient to meet the needs of persons who counseled christians. Only a few writers have begun with a christian base and have attempted to elaborate a truly christian psychotherapy (Tweedie, D.1963).

In Islam, Koran was sent to people to lead and invite them to worship only one God and learn new values, new ways of thinking and new ways of life styles. It's spiritual instructions keep adaptive behaviors, which are for the goodness and well-being of individual and society. By following these spiritual instructions man can enhance his self-control which leads to his self-fulfillment and comprising his prosperity and happiness in this life and in his after life.

The fundamental effect which Koran put in Arab nations changed their personality and their life styles tremendously to the point that Arabs came up with some well-accepted theoretical concepts about man and universe. These Islamic concepts were spread all over the world. Some of the passages about Koran are as follow:

### **Part 15. The children of Israel. Verse 9**

جزء پانزدهم، سوره اسراء

آیه 9 و

**“ surely this Koran guides to the most upright faith and gives good tidings to the believers who do deeds of righteousness, that theirs shall a great wage.”**

“ این قرآن مردم را به صحیح ترین آئین ها راهنمایی میکند و به مومنان نیکوکار و باتقوا بشارت می دهد که از پاداش بزرگ برخوردار خواهند شد.”

### **Part 11, Jonah, verse 57**

جزء یازدهم . سوره یونس

آیه 57 ،

**“ O mankind! There has come to you indeed admonition from your lord and a healing for what is in the breasts and a guidance and a mercy for the believers.”**

“ ای مردم از سوی خدا (قرآن) که پر از موعظه و نصیحت و رحمت است برای شما آمد.”

### Part 15. The children of Israel

جزء پانزدهم ، سوره

اسراء ، آیه 82

**“ And we send down, of the Koran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers; and the unbelievers it increases not, except in loss.”**

” و این قرآن را که نازل می کنیم ، برای ایمان آورندگان شفا و رحمت است ، اما برای کافران جز زیان نیفزاید.”

### Part 24, Distinguished

جزء بیست و چهارم ، سوره فصلت

44 آیه ، “... say to the believers: It is a guidance, and a healing to the believers....”

” ... بگو : این کتاب برای آنهایی که ایمان آورده اند کتاب هدایت و درمان است... ”

### Part 25, Crouching

جزء بیست و پنجم ، سوره

الجاثیه ، آیه 20

**“ This (Koran) is clear indication for mankind, and a guidance and a mercy for folk whose faith is sure.”**

” این قرآن مایه بصیرت مردم و برای اهل یقین ، هدایت و رحمتی است.”

### Technique.

The starting point of all Psychotherapies is the concept of the nature of man. The Bible teaches that man’s nature has three parts: flesh, soul and spirit.

The *flesh* is made up of more than the body, for it also incorporates the biological drives such as sex, sleep and appetite. These give rise to certain behaviors that serve to satisfy the appetites.

The *soul* has within its functions the things that psychology places in the intellect.

The *spirit* is an animating force that resides in man and operates through the flesh and soul.

In the christian psychotherapeutic scheme, the spiritual aspect of man’s existence is of great importance, for it is in this area of functioning that God operates.

One of the most useful ideas in the christian belief system is that God gives his followers the power to live according to the values he has given them in the Bible. Christians believe that at birth man has an inherited force called sin and that this force causes him to want to control and guide his own destiny. He can not obey God’s rules. Because he disobeys, he remains alienated from God and is not whole.

When he is incomplete, he suffers. When he rebels, his behavior brings him pain, which causes him to suffer.

The prime concern of the christian psychotherapist is, therefore, man's alienation from God and his lack of wholeness. His concept of pathology is that incompleteness, gives rise to emptiness and meaninglessness, and his rebellion gives rise to suffering because of the consequences of sin.

The concept of health usually considered to be characteristic of christian psychotherapy is that of holiness or wholeness. Wholeness or sanctification begins with a transcendental experience (Salvation), but at the outset man remains incomplete. After salvation, the christian life is one of constant self-inspection and therapy. Confession, reproof, instruction, and the performance of good works in love are all part of the process through which behavior is modified and men are made whole (Karasu, T. B.1977).

The mode of change in christian psychotherapy involves a synthesis of the various mechanisms used by the proponents of the three kinds of psychotherapy: depth insight, direct learning, and immediate experiencing. Christian psychotherapy adds as its primary goal reconciliation with God.

In christian psychotherapy, we have to recognize that the "present is viewed through the past in anticipation of the future." (Marias, 1971). Therefore, an understanding of the past is necessary to determine what changes must take place in order that the new patterns of behavior can be established. The objective reality of the patient's present situation must, therefore, be examined in order to determine the significance of the subjectively remembered past. The intellectual and emotional knowledge gained can be used to help the patient understand his current behavior.

The christian therapist begins by establishing an atmosphere of mutual acceptance in order to encourage the patient's self-expression. He has to determine his relationship to God. He then has to uncover conflicts and assist in their resolution. If behavioral patterns need changing, he must program, reward and shape responses.

The christian psychotherapist should use all of the tools and methods commonly used in psychotherapy. He uses such techniques as free-association, structured interviewing, persuasion, dream interpretation, hypnosis, psychodrama, visualization, role playing, and others to help the patients get in touch with his long repressed feelings. He will then use

forgiveness and surrender as a method of ridding the patient of the undesirable emotions that have so influenced his behavior.

Prayer and the understanding of biblical ideas concerning conflict resolution and behavioral control are part of the therapy. The promise of love, joy and peace, to say nothing of abundant life and eternal life are powerful incentives for working toward healing.

In Islamic psychotherapy there are some important factors that can be considered as primary and secondary prevention and also as treatment.

These are:

## 1. The relationship between faith and feeling of security:

جزء هفتم سوره انعام

Part 7, The cattle, verse 82

(چارپایان) آیه 82

**“ Those who believe and obscure not their belief by wrong doing, theirs is safety, and they are rightly guided.”**

” آنان که به خدا ایمان آورده و ایمان خود را به ظلم و ستم آلوده نکرده اند، برای آنها راحتی است و آنها هدایت شدگانند.”

جزء سیزدهم ، سوره رعد

Part 13, The Thunder, verse 28

آیه 28 ،

**“ Those who believe, and whose hearts have rest in the remembrance of Allah. Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.”**

” آنان که ایمان آورده اند و دل‌هایشان بیاد خدا آرامش می‌یابد، آگاه باشید که دل‌ها فقط بیاد خدا آرامش می‌پذیرد.”

جزء بیست و ششم ، سوره احقاف

Part 26, Sand-dunes, verse 13

آیه 13 ،

**“ surely those who say: our lord is Allah, then they continue on the right way, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.”**

” البته آنان که گفتند: پروردگار ما خدای یگانه است و سپس پایداری ورزیدند ، نه بیمی بر آنهاست و نه غمی و اندوهی خواهند داشت.”

جزء پنجم ، سوره نساء ،

Part 5, the women, verse 110

آیه 110

**“ And who ever does evil or acts unjustly to his sow, then ask forgiveness of Allah, he shall find Allah forgiving Merciful.”**

” هرکس که عمل زشت انجام دهد و مجودستم کند و بعداً از خدا آمرزش خواهد ، خدا را بخشنده و مهربان خواهد یافت.”

**Part 16, Taha, verse82**

جزء 16 ، سورة طها

آیه 82 ،

**“ And verily i am All-forgiving toward him who repents and believes and does good, then continues to follow the right direction.”**

” هرکس توبه کند و ایمان آورد و نیکوکار باشد و به راه هدایت قدم بردارد ، آمرزیده خواهد شد.”

**2. In relation with faith and dependency with groups we find:**

**Part 6, The Table spread, verse2**

جزء ششم ، سورة مائده ،

آیه 2

**“...and help one another in goodness and piety-and do not help are another in sin and aggression...”**

” ... و درکارهای نیک و تقوی باید کمک کنید و نباید در مورد ظلم و گناه یاری نمایید و از خدایتزسید و تقوی را پیشه خود سازید که عذاب خدا بسیار است.”

**Applications**

Christian psychotherapeutic techniques are applicables where wholeness is a desirable therapeutic outcome. It must be recognized that psychotherapy whether secular, Islamic or christian, is not considered to be a primary treatment for biologically determined diseases such as manic-depressive and schizophrenia.

Christian psychotherapeutic technique is particularly useful in alcoholism, durg addiction, chaotic personality (the adult who was a maltreated child), and neurosis. The christian dimension of therapy (wholeness) and the Islamic dimension of therapy (compassion and forgiveness) should be applied only in those patients who do not object to its inclusion in the therapeutic effort.

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