

# PsychoHeresy: C. G. Jung's Legacy to the Church

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The overwhelming majority of Christians have probably never heard of C. G. Jung, but his influence in the church is vast and affects sermons, books, and activities, such as the prolific use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) by seminaries and missionary organizations. A current, popular example of Jung's legacy can be seen in Robert Hicks's book *The Masculine Journey*, which was given to each of the 50,000 men who attended the 1993 Promise Keepers conference. Christians need to learn enough about Jung and his teachings to be warned and wary.

Jung's legacy to "Christian psychology" is both direct and indirect. Some professing Christians, who have been influenced by Jung's teachings, integrate aspects of Jungian theory into their own practice of psychotherapy. They may incorporate his notions regarding personality types, the personal unconscious, dream analysis, and various archetypes in their own attempt to understand and counsel their clients. Other Christians have been influenced more indirectly as they have engaged in inner healing, followed 12-step programs, or taken the MBTI, which is based on Jung's personality types and incorporates his theories of introversion and extroversion.

## Jung and Freud

Jung's legacy has not enhanced Christianity. From its inception psychotherapy has undermined the doctrines of Christianity. Sigmund Freud's attitudes towards Christianity were obviously hostile, since he believed that religious doctrines are all illusions and labeled all religion as "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity."<sup>1</sup> His one-time follower and colleague Carl Jung, on the other hand, may not be quite as obvious in his disdain for Christianity. However, his theories have disdainfully diminished Christian doctrines by putting them at the same level as those of all religions.

While Jung did not call religion a "universal obsessional neurosis," he did view all religions, including Christianity, to be collective mythologies - not real in essence, but having a real effect on the human personality. Dr. Thomas Szasz describes the difference between the psychoanalytic theories of the two men this way: "Thus in Jung's view religions are indispensable spiritual supports, whereas in Freud's they are illusory crutches."<sup>2</sup> While Freud argued that religions are delusionary and therefore evil, Jung contended that all religions are imaginary but good. Both positions are anti-Christian; one denies Christianity and the other mythologizes it.

After reading Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, Jung contacted Freud and a friendship with mutual admiration ensued and lasted about eight years. Even though Jung had served four years as the first president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, the break between Jung and Freud was complete. Jung departed from Freud on a number of points, particularly Freud's sex theory. In addition, Jung had been developing his own theory and methodology, known as analytical psychology.

## The Collective Unconscious

Jung taught that the psyche consists of various systems including the *personal unconscious* with its complexes and a collective unconscious with its archetypes. Jung's theory of a *personal unconscious* is quite similar to Freud's creation of a region containing a person's repressed, forgotten or ignored experiences. However, Jung considered the *personal unconscious* to be a "more or less superficial layer of the unconscious." Within the personal unconscious are what he called "feeling-

toned complexes.” He said that “they constitute the personal and private side of psychic life.”<sup>3</sup> These are feelings and perceptions organized around significant persons or events in the person’s life.

Jung believed that there was a deeper and more significant layer of the unconscious, which he called the *collective unconscious*, with what he identified as *archetypes*, which he believed were innate, unconscious, and generally universal. Jung’s *collective unconscious* has been described as a “storehouse of latent memory traces inherited from man’s ancestral past, a past that includes not only the racial history of man as a separate species but his pre-human or animal ancestry as well.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Jung’s theory incorporates Darwin’s theory of evolution as well as ancient mythology. Jung taught that this *collective unconscious* is shared by all people and is therefore universal. However, since it is unconscious, not all people are able to tap into it. Jung saw the *collective unconscious* as the foundational structure of personality on which the *personal unconscious* and the ego are built. Because he believed that the foundations of personality are ancestral and universal, he studied religions, mythology, rituals, symbols, dreams and visions. He says:

All esoteric teachings seek to apprehend the unseen happenings in the psyche, and all claim supreme authority for themselves. What is true of primitive lore is true in even higher degree of the ruling world religions. They contain a revealed knowledge that was originally hidden, and they set forth the secrets of the soul in glorious images<sup>5</sup>

### **Jung’s View of Christianity**

However, because Jung left room for religion, many Christians felt more comfortable with his ideas. Thus it is important to look at Jung’s attitudes towards Christianity. His father was a Protestant minister, and Jung experienced aspects of the Christian faith while growing up. He wrote the following about his early experience with the Holy Communion, which seems to be related to his later ideas about religions being only myths:

Slowly I came to understand that this communion had been a fatal experience for me. It had proved hollow; more than that, it had proved to be a total loss. I knew that I would never again be able to participate in this ceremony. “Why, that is not religion at all,” I thought. “It is the absence of God; the church is a place I should not go to. It is not life which is there, but death.”<sup>6</sup>

From that one significant incident, Jung could have proceeded to deny all religions, but he didn’t. Instead, he evidently saw that religion was very meaningful to many people and that religions could be useful as myths. His choice to consider all religions as myths was further influenced by his view of psychoanalysis. According to Viktor Von Weizsaecker, “C. G. Jung was the first to understand that psychoanalysis belonged in the sphere of religion.”<sup>7</sup> That Jung’s theories constitute a religion can be seen in his view of God as the collective unconscious and thereby present in each person’s unconscious. For him religions revealed aspects of the unconscious and could thus tap into a person’s psyche. He also used dreams as avenues into the psyche for self-understanding and self-exploration. Religion was only a tool to tap into the self and if a person wanted to use Christian symbols that was fine with him.

### **Jung’s Spirit Guide**

Because Jung turned psychoanalysis into a type of religion, he is also considered to be a transpersonal psychologist as well as a psychoanalytical theorist. He delved deeply into the occult, practiced necromancy, and had daily contact with disembodied spirits, which he called archetypes. Much of what he wrote was inspired by such entities. Jung had his own familiar spirit whom he called Philemon. At first he thought Philemon was part of his own psyche, but later on he found that Philemon was more than an expression of his own inner self. Jung says:

Philemon and other figures of my fantasies brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life. Philemon represented a force which was not myself. In my fantasies I held conversations with him, and he said things which I had not consciously thought. For I observed clearly that it was he who spoke, not I. . . . Psychologically, Philemon represented superior insight. He was a mysterious figure to me. At times he seemed to me quite real, as if he were a living personality. I went walking up and down the garden with him, and to me he was what the Indians call a guru<sup>8</sup>

One can see why Jung is so very popular among New Agers.

### **Jung's AA Influence**

Jung also played a role in the development of Alcoholics Anonymous. Cofounder Bill Wilson wrote the following in a letter to Jung in 1961:

This letter of great appreciation has been very long overdue. . . . Though you have surely heard of us [AA], I doubt if you are aware that a certain conversation you once had with one of your patients, a Mr. Roland H., back in the early 1930's did play a critical role in the founding of our fellowship<sup>9</sup>

Wilson continued the letter by reminding Jung of what he had "frankly told [Roland H.] of his hopelessness," that he was beyond medical or psychiatric help. Wilson wrote: "This candid and humble statement of yours was beyond doubt the first foundation stone upon which our society has since been built." When Roland H. had asked Jung if there was any hope for him Jung "told him that there might be, provided he could become the subject of a spiritual or religious experience - in short, a genuine conversion." Wilson continued in his letter: "You recommended that he place himself in a religious atmosphere and hope for the best."<sup>10</sup> As far as Jung was concerned, there was no need for doctrine or creed, only an experience.

It is important to note that Jung could not have meant conversion to Christianity, because as far as Jung was concerned all religion is simply myth - a symbolic way of interpreting the life of the psyche. To Jung, conversion simply meant a totally dramatic experience that would profoundly alter a person's outlook on life. Jung himself had blatantly rejected Christianity and turned to idolatry. He replaced God with a myriad of mythological archetypes.

Jung's response to Wilson's letter included the following statement about Roland H.:

His craving for alcohol was the equivalent, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness; expressed in medieval language: the union with God<sup>11</sup>

In his letter Jung mentioned that in Latin the same word is used for alcohol as for "the highest religious experience." Even in English, alcohol is referred to as *spirits*. But, knowing Jung's theology and privy counsel with a familiar spirit, one must conclude that the spirit he is referring to is not the Holy Spirit, and the god he is talking about is not the God of the Bible, but rather a counterfeit spirit posing as an angel of light and leading many to destruction.

### **Jung's Blasphemy**

Jung's neo-paganism and his desire to replace Christianity with his own concept of psychoanalysis can be seen in a letter he wrote to Freud:

I imagine a far finer and more comprehensive task for [psychoanalysis] than alliance with an ethical fraternity. I think we must give it time to infiltrate into people from many centers, to revivify among intellectuals a feeling for symbol and myth, ever so gently to transform Christ back into the soothsaying god of the vine, which he was, and in this way absorb those ecstatic instinctual forces of Christianity for the one purpose of making the cult and the sacred myth what they once were - a drunken feast of joy where man regained the ethos and holiness of an animal.<sup>12</sup>

Thus Jung's goal for psychoanalysis was to be an all-encompassing religion superior to Christianity, reducing its truth to myth and transmuting Christ into a "soothsaying god of the vine." God's answer to such blasphemy can be seen in Psalm 2:

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,  
Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.  
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.  
Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Christians dabble in Jung's religion when they incorporate his notions about man and deity through imbibing in his theories, therapies, and notions that have filtered down through other psychotherapies, through 12-step programs, through inner healing, through dream analysis, and through personality types and tests.

### End Notes

1. Sigmund Freud. *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. and edited by James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961, p. 43.
2. Thomas Szasz. *The Myth of Psychotherapy*. Garden City: Doubleday/Anchor Press, 1978, p. 173.
3. C. G. Jung. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 2nd ed., trans. by R.F.C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 4.
4. Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey. *Theories of Personality*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1957, p. 80.
5. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, op. cit., p. 7.
6. C. G. Jung. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. by Aniela Jaffe, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston. New York: Pantheon, 1963, p. 55.
7. Victor Von Weizsaecker, "Reminiscences of Freud and Jung." *Freud and the Twentieth Century*, B. Nelson, ed. New York: Meridian, 1957, p. 72.
8. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, op. cit., p. 183.
9. "Spiritus contra Spiritum: The Bill Wilson/C.G. Jung Letters: The roots of the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous." *Parabola*, Vol. XII, No. 2, May 1987, p. 68.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
12. C. G. Jung quoted by Richard Noll. *The Jung Cult*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 188.

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