

From the North Carolina Psychoanalytic Society's 2009-2010 Scientific Program Series

Saturday, December 5, 2009

A Mentalized Faith

Presented by

Steve Bennett, ThM, PhD



Psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapy often pose problems for traditional religious believers because the psychoanalytic process clashes with some of the believers' core values. Traditional religious communities typically grant authority to a religious text, tend to be suspicious of the value of affects for informing or guiding life, and often conflate religious formation and personal devotion, thereby obscuring the role of personal agency in individual faith development. For a meaningful psychoanalytic process to develop, psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapists must help traditional believers to distinguish individual from group identities and transference phenomena from cultural values.

This talk will argue that mature religious commitment requires that faith be mentalized. A believer who has achieved a mentalized faith is able to "play" with religious ideas, beliefs, and values, including doubt. Similarly, when working with traditional religious patients, psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists may be challenged to recognize their own quasi-religious commitments and to play with alternative metaphysical perspectives when working with religious patients. As faith is mentalized, the meaning of a person's received religious story becomes better integrated with his or her personal experience. Clinical examples are offered to demonstrate unmentalized faith and mentalized faith and the changes in religious experience and practice that can occur as capacities for mentalizing are developed.

Steve Bennett, ThM, PhD is a psychoanalyst, clinical psychologist, and seminary graduate who, as the Director of the Center for Psychological and Family Services in Chapel Hill, NC has consulted with numerous ministers and congregations and trained psychotherapists in the integration of psychology and theology. He is a recent graduate of the Psychoanalytic Institute of the Carolinas (now the Psychoanalytic Education Center of the Carolinas), is on faculty of the PECC, and is adjunct clinical faculty in the UNC Department of Psychiatry. His formal training in departments of theology, philosophy, psychology, and religious studies contribute to a broad understanding of the relationship between religious faith and psychological functioning. His work on the integration of psychology and theology was recognized with the Travis Award by the Fuller Graduate School of Psychology.

Schedule:

9:30-10am Registration and refreshments
10-12:00noon Presentation, discussion, Q&A

Location:

The Lucy Daniels Foundation building
9001 Weston Parkway, Cary, NC 27513

Cost: \$45 (\$50 at the door) **Registration prior to the date of the program is encouraged and appreciated.** The presentation is offered at no charge to NC Psychoanalytic Society members. Pre-registered full-time students with ID and trainees in Departments of Social Work, Psychology, and Psychiatry are admitted without charge as well. Scholarships are available for others for whom the admission fee is a hardship. Please contact the Administrator (contact information listed below) if interested.

How to Register:

Payment by Credit Card: You may register online beginning August 25th at www.ncpsasoc.org/registration.shtml or mail contact information and credit card information to:

NC Psychoanalytic Society, 901 Paverstone Drive, Suite 11, Raleigh, NC 27615

Payment by Check: Mail contact information and check to:

NC Psychoanalytic Society, 901 Paverstone Drive, Suite 11, Raleigh, NC 27615

Society members should register by emailing a request for reservation to info@ncpsasoc.org

Special accommodations may be made for participants with disabilities. Please contact the Society Administrator at the number below before November 20th to make arrangements.

Our refund/cancellation policy is available upon request. Contact the Administrator for further details. Up to 2 Category I CME credits are offered through the American Psychoanalytic Association. NCPS is approved by the American Psychological Association to offer up to 2 Category A CE hours for Psychologists. Letters of attendance will be provided to all others. See below for details.

If you have any questions, please contact the Administrator at 877-572-6778 or info@ncpsasoc.org.

Directions: Lucy Daniels Foundation (LDF) is located at 9001 Weston Parkway in Cary, NC. From I-40, take exit 287, Cary/Harrison Avenue. Proceed toward Cary on Harrison Avenue, approximately one-half mile. Turn right onto Weston Parkway and travel for 1.5 miles. The LDF is across the median on the left. Continue driving another 0.1 mile and make a U-turn at the median break to return to the LDF, now on your right. After turning into the LDF drive, you may park alongside the building or in the upper parking lot. (The LDF is located in the end of the building closer to Weston Parkway; the section of the building housing the Lucy Daniels Center for Early Childhood is at the far end, closer to the upper parking lot.)

Target Audience: Open to mental health professionals and anyone else with an interest in this topic. This program is at an intermediate to advanced instructional level.

Educational Objectives:

- a. Participants will, as a result of this presentation, be able to identify and explain an inherent tension between the goals of psychoanalysis and the values of traditional religious communities.
- b. Participants will be able to apply the construct of mentalization to religious faith and distinguish psychologically primitive from mature expressions of faith.
- c. Clinicians should be able to demonstrate the importance of distinguishing personal identity from cultural identity when working within an inter-cultural dyad.

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the Essential Areas and Policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through the joint sponsorship of The American Psychoanalytic Association and the North Carolina Psychoanalytic Society. The American Psychoanalytic Association is accredited by the ACCME to provide continuing medical education for physicians and takes responsibility for the content, quality, and scientific integrity of this CME activity.

The American Psychoanalytic Association designates this educational activity for a maximum of 2 hours in category 1 credit towards the AMA Physician's Recognition Award. Each physician should claim only those hours of credit that he/she actually spent in the educational activity.

The North Carolina Psychoanalytic Society is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The North Carolina Psychoanalytic Society maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURE INFORMATION FOR ALL LEARNERS: None of the planners or presenters of this CME program has any relevant financial relationships to be disclosed.

Patient confidentiality is maintained throughout the program.