

As Bread that is Broken: A Call to Communal Response against Depression

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Abstract

Depression is a visible, growing, and terrible reality of our present age. Over one third of Princeton University students suffer from some form of depression, and experts postulate that every single American will be affected by depression in their lifetime, either by directly suffering its symptoms, or indirectly through relationship with someone who struggles with it. Depression is quickly becoming the spirit of this present age.

Depression is a multi-faceted, highly subjective phenomenon, and experts across the board still struggle to define it exactly in the language of psychology, biochemistry, or even theology. Far from providing an exhaustive study, this paper seeks to view the reality of depression through the lens of a Gospel worldview, that is, a worldview centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Defining depression as but one of the many forms of the Sin that plagues a creation that has fallen into corruption at every single level enables us to look to the Cross to see how Christ has and is continuing to bring the hope of redemption and renewal to all who turn and look upon His love in faith.

This paper's approach to depression is three-fold, organized around three questions we have for depression. The first is that of WHAT, *what is the view of depression* through the world's eyes. By briefly at biochemical theories, cultural assumptions, and personal testimonies, we see that depression cannot be reduced to either physical or psychological causes, but involves the whole person, mind, body, as well as spirit. Secondly, we ask the question of WHY, *why is it that depression plagues us so?* In questions of "why," we must turn from the observations of science towards the revelation of Scripture. In examining both the Old and the New Testaments, we will see that depression is indeed an aspect of the multiformality of sin. Finally, we ask HOW, *how does the Gospel apply to depression, and how we are called as the Church to respond in our age?* By looking at how Jesus Christ Himself suffered and overcame depression on the cross, we find a model for the way that we as His Body the Church may also minister, in love, to those who are groaning under the bondage of sin.

It is the thesis of this paper that it is by recovering a sense of our own brokenness that Christians may find the strength we need to embrace our depressed brothers and sisters. The concluding portion of this paper will seek to identify some ways that the Manna Christian Fellowship, as part of the visible presence of Christ on the Princeton University campus, can embrace the reality of its own brokenness in order to build on its God-given strength of community to become an effective minister to the depressed. It is in our weakness that Christ gives us the strength to fulfill His mission to the Church to announce the light of the Good News of the Kingdom of God to those trapped in the dark night of depression.

Part I

WHAT it is: Facing Down and Facing Up to the Demon of Depression

The emptiness should have been a clue. A clue that this was not just a string of bad days or a phase. This was something bigger, something that had managed to take over my life. There was emptiness everywhere.¹

These words were not written by an early twentieth-century existentialist novelist. They are not the opening words of a goth-rocker's personal memoirs. They are not, thankfully, the closing words of a suicide note, though many who have thought the same things have not been so fortunate. They are not the words of a Nietzsche or a Satre, a Kurt Cobain or a Jim Morrison, of a Dante or a Pascal or a Kierkegaard or a Hemingway; nor are they the words of the Psalmist or even the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

The chances are good, in fact, that they were written by someone you know. Someone you just had dinner with. Someone you sat behind in class last semester. Someone you are meeting to pray with tomorrow morning. They might even sound like words of your own, or words you might have spoken had you not been so terrified of what they would sound like coming forth from your own lips.

These words were taken from the account of an anonymous Princeton University student that was included in a recent anthology of personal narratives that attempts to “give voice to experiences we often hesitate to talk about.”² He was describing an affliction of mind, body and spirit that has stricken at least 33% of the souls on most university campuses, as well nearly 19 million Americans every year, though less than 20% of those who suffer it will seek treatment or even admit that it is a real problem in their lives.³ He is battling with an inexplicable force that everyone will, at sometime in their life, be confronted with and affected by, whether personally or through a relationship to someone they love.⁴

¹ Anonymous. “Emptiness.” *Uninvisible: Student Voices on Psychological Health and Well-Being*. Ammon, Analisa, et al. Princeton: Trustees of Princeton University, 2004, 11. This pamphlet is available at McCosh Center Counseling and Psychological Services or online at www.princeton.edu/puhs.

² Ibid, 2.

³ “MHIC: Mental Health Statistics.” www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/15.cfm. 4/28/05.

⁴ “Depression Statistics.” www.upliftprogram.com/depression_stats.html. 4/28/05.

From my own personal struggles with this terror and from what others have shared with me, I think writer Andrew Solomon gives perfect name to this emptiness when he said, “depression is a demon who leaves you appalled.”⁵

Ecclesiastes II: Testimonies of the Princetonian

Confronted with the limits of language and our own power, perhaps one of only things we can hope to do at all is to listen. Let us continue to listen to the words of our friend from Princeton:

My room was filled with empty coffee cups, empty packs of Camel Lights, And empty water bottles that told the story of my purposeless days and Sleepless nights. There was a pile of blank, white printer paper, void of any Writing. It should have been filled with 400 words for my response paper, 2,500 words for my final paper, and 20,000 words for my thesis. I spent hours in front of my computer, yet weeks went by and those pages remained empty...

It wasn't that life was empty. For the few waking hours when I did decide to Leave my room and join the rest of the waking world, I enjoyed myself. You Would have never have known that I lived in my own personal hell...some People who knew about the emptiness thought the enjoyment was all a façade, But it wasn't. It was a distraction. And after awhile, I started to chase that distraction, because I couldn't bear the sight of those blank pages. All I wanted Was to start afresh, but I didn't know how...the further I sank, the more I ran after Anything and everything.

But the pain of running after something I could never catch was nothing compared to the frustration I felt when I slowed down at the end of each day. Every night seemed endless. They were all filled with racing thoughts: thoughts I could never explain. It was a combination of sadness, guilt, confusion, and frustration. This mixture of emotion was only expressed in the blank look I gave people who tried to help. They wanted to understand, but how could they? I was still trying to grasp what was happening. I was trapped inside my own head.⁶

This “personal hell” sounds hauntingly close to the words of Solomon, written by Qoheleth in the Book of Ecclesiastes: “What does man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.” (2:22-23) Many times we ask with Qoheleth, “for whom am I toiling, and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?” (4:8b) Divorced from a sense of purpose and trapped inside the howling abyss of our own thoughts, even hell begins to sound beautiful by comparison.

⁵ Solomon, Andrew. *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*. New York: Scribner, 2001, 16.

⁶ “Emptiness.” 11-12.

We all experience some aspect of depression when we find ourselves sucked into the temptation to place ourselves at the center of our lives, and in today's society, it takes little more than a glimpse at the television to see that depression is the spirit of the present age, the "spirit of the world" of which St. Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 2:12. As students and staff at one of the most prestigious universities in the world, driven by success and desiring to push our many gifts to the full, we dance precariously close to the brink of depression's abyss every day. Hear again to the words of the Princetonian, our modern Qoheleth:

With each step came a new thought. And although these thoughts fueled my confusion, I was fascinated by them and was curious to see if the next thought would lead me to an explanation of my insanity...and what I wanted more than anything was a reason why all this was happening...I couldn't concentrate on anything. Even something as simple as reading an e-mail required more energy than I had. Almost every day, without warning, I was suddenly sucked into my very own black hole. It felt like being caught in the undertow of a wave; there was nothing I could do except wait for it to end. I knew that eventually the wave would wash me onto the shore, but until then I had to hold my breath and pray... The confusion I felt during my waking hours turned into chaotic and frightening dreams that continued to haunt me long after I awoke. Trying to escape from hell was like trying to escape your shadow...after months and months of dealing with the hell that had become my life, I started to realize that I had inadvertently become my own worst enemy.⁷

And on and on he continues. The Princetonian shares with us how he descends into alcoholism, becomes estranged from his best friends and even his family, and nearly fails out of school because of his incapacity to work.

His story is a timeless one, sung not only from the hearts of the bluesman, the poor and the downtrodden, but also from the hearts of kings and geniuses. Even the greatest of saints, King David, a man after God's own heart, experienced a walk through his own personal hell, and wrote one of history's most compelling and poetic descriptions of the darkness:

For my soul is full of trouble
And my life draws near to the grave.
I am counted among those who have gone down to the pit;
I am like a man without strength.
I am set apart with the dead,
Like the slain who lie in the grave,
Whom you remember no more,

⁷ Ibid, 13-14.

Who are cut off from your care.
You have put me in the lowest pit,
In the darkest depths.
Your wrath lies heavily upon me;
You have overwhelmed me with all your waves.
You have taken from me my closest friends
And have made me repulsive to them.
I am confined and cannot escape;
My eyes are dim with grief...

From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death;
I have suffered your terrors and am in despair.
Your wrath has swept over me;
Your terrors have destroyed me.
All day long they surround me like a flood;
They have completely engulfed me.
You have taken my companions and loved ones from me;
The darkness is my closest friend.
(Psalm 88:3-9, 15-18)

A pit. Waves. A flood, despair and terror. Isolation. These metaphorical images serve to make present a painful existential estrangement not only from human communities and the psalmist's deepest sense of self, but also, in spite of his song being a cry to God, there is the profoundest sense of being severed from the source of all purpose, meaning, being, life, and of love.

Thus far we have heard voices ancient and modern speaking *about* depression. But what exactly *is* depression? What are its causes? How can we recognize it more precisely? How can we begin to diagnose ourselves and others, to discern between what is simply a rough day at work and a possession by an afflicting spirit, a disease of a disease? If these past few paragraphs have seemed at all vague, it is in part to illustrate the difficulty we find when talking about mental illness, and especially the phenomenon of depression. Statistics, biochemical theories, psychiatric labels and even personal narratives each offer up glimpses of the face of this strange being. They can, however, give us only fragments and pieces of our illusory foe, at best a vision of his backside as he slips back into the shadows and out of the sight of our limited subjectivities. As Solomon writes,

Depression is a condition that is almost unimaginable to anyone who has not known it...it's not an easy diagnosis because it depends on metaphors, and the metaphors one patient chooses are different from those selected by another patient...let us make no bones about it: we do not really know what causes depression. We do not really know what constitutes depression. We do not know why certain treatments may be effective for depression. We do not

know how depression made it through the evolutionary process. We do not know why one person gets a depression from circumstances that do not trouble another. We do not know how will operates in this context.⁸

We do not know. Many times we simply cannot know. Perhaps this is what confounds us the most, causes us to feel so appalled, frustrated, and hopeless as we struggle impotently to understand, to cope, to describe, and to love ourselves and others who face down the demon Depression.

Clinical Considerations

While it raises serious philosophical and spiritual questions, it is to psychiatry and to science that people most often turn to find sufficient metaphors to define and deal with depression. The most commonly invoked descriptive language can be found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, now in its fourth edition (DSM-IV), which is put out by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Depressions run the gambit from being situationally-induced, resulting in a lower level of discontent known as a Dysthymic Disorder, to a more serious and permanent sense of hopelessness, which is known to the experts as a clinical depression, or a Major Depressive Episode. The latter forms the building block for what is known as a “Depressive Disorder,” or “Bipolar Disorder.”⁹ The DSM-IV describes a “major depressive episode” as follows:

Five or more of the following symptoms have been present during the same two-week period and represent a change from previous functioning; at least one of the symptoms is either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.

- (1) depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day, as indicated by subjective report or observation made by others
- (2) markedly diminished interest in pleasure at all, or in almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day
- (3) significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain (e.g., a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month), or a decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day
- (4) insomnia or hypersomnia every day
- (5) psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day
- (6) fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day
- (7) feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day

⁸ Ibid, 29.

⁹ Welch, Edward T. *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*. Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2004, 28. All of the information in this paragraph is taken from Dr. Welch’s account, including the DSM-IV excerpts, which can be found on pages 327 and 349 of the APA’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition*. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

- (8) diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day
- (9) recurrent thoughts of death and suicide...not associated with substance abuse or a general medical condition

In addition, the DSM-IV also lists symptoms for Dysthymic Disorder, a variant of depression that lasts longer but is less intense. Notice how some of the more severe criterion are omitted:

Presence, while depressed, of two (or more) of the following:

- (1) poor appetite or overeating
- (2) insomnia or hypersomnia
- (3) low energy or fatigue
- (4) low self-esteem
- (5) poor concentration or difficulty making decisions
- (6) feelings of hopelessness

While labels oftentimes give us a sense of knowing, and hence a degree of perceived control, the criteria listed for both disorders run the entire spectrum of possible symptoms for any number of diseases. And, as any college student can attest, by these standards nearly every single person who has ever pulled an all-nighter, and basically every single engineering student who has ever walked the streets of Princeton, could be classified as suffering from some form of depression. This is not to make light of the seriousness of the suffering encountered by any individual; however, stress, anxiety, guilt, sleeplessness, laziness, and a terrible diet are common symptoms of the common disease we call a college education. These symptoms can and have acted as life-saving warning signs for many who have been on the verge of a depressive episode. But surely, with something so serious and so prevalent, is this the best that science can come up with? Or are we simply all depressed?

The difficulty of defining depression should not surprise us, given that the brain is perhaps the final frontier of human knowledge, the undiscovered country into whose mysteries science has only begun to gain a foothold. Neurobiologists and biochemists are racing one another to discover the next insight that will lead to the development of medications and a definitive answer for a depressed public. One of the most popular theories concerns neurotransmitters, known as the monamine theory¹⁰. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that cross the synapse, the gap between the ends of two nerve fibers in the

¹⁰ Kramer, Peter D. *Against Depression*. New York: Viking, 2005, 56.

brain, or between neurons and muscle cells. These chemicals, the most popularized of which is 5-hydroxytryptamine (5-HT), or serotonin, act as transportation mechanisms for information transmitted electronically through nerves to be relayed throughout the body, and then back to the brain.¹¹ As psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer of Brown University describes it,

...serotonin is the police. The police aren't in one place – they're not in the police station. They are a presence everywhere. They are cruising the city – they are right here. Their potential presence makes you feel secure. It allows you to do many things that make you feel secure. If you don't have enough police, all sorts of things can happen. You may have riots. The absence of police does not cause riots. But if you do have a riot, and you don't have police, there is nothing to stop the riots from spreading.¹²

Serotonin itself does not cause depression. But its absence, which some attribute to genetics, predisposes an individual towards suffering depressive symptoms. The common treatment recommended by this theory is the prescription of Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), which help to keep the neurotransmitters active in the synapse for a longer time in order to make up for their deficient numbers. Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft are just a few of the brands in the rapidly growing market of antidepressants that fall under the category of SSRI.

A second theory gaining popularity and credibility at this time, the neuroresilience theory, builds on the groundwork laid in the monoamine theory. Again, according to Kramer, this theory looks at the brain as lacking a certain amount of neuro-armor in the prefrontal cortex of the brain, the region concerned with moral sensibility, planning, and other capacities essential to social functioning. Using computer-aided mapping of brain cell samples, researchers have discovered that in depressed patients, the cells in the prefrontal region were weakened, disorganized, and disconnected, constituting a distinctive neuro-pathology.¹³ Most notably affected were cells called glia, which provide external support and help to mediate between neurons and the environment, a kind of glue that holds the brain together. In this theory, depression is characterized by a lack of or an atrophy of glia and other brain cells.¹⁴ At the present, the general consensus seems to be that those who suffer from depression are genetically pre-disposed to have a weaker

¹¹ Cousens, Gabriel. *Depression Free for Life: A Physician's All-Natural, 5-Step Plan*. New York: Quill, 2000, 6-9.

¹² Kramer, 56.

¹³ Kramer, 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 54-56.

neuroresilience, and so suffer more intense damage in the presence of the stress and duress that the brain encounters in everyday situations. Like the monoamine theory, SSRI's and other medications are prescribed not so much as reparative measures as they are to prevent future damage and to keep the brain functioning at an acceptable level. Others, however assert that medication can be avoided in favor of adjusting one's diet so as to include the amino acids and proteins needed to rebuild the brain and renew its capacities. Dr. Gabriel Cousens gives the mapping for a holistic, 5-step plan in his book *Depression Free for Life*¹⁵. In either case, the onset of depression calls for significant lifestyle and biochemical alterations.

As science learns more, the impending temptation to reduce depression to a merely physiological phenomenon will continue to vie for dominance, especially for those who hold a solely materialistic worldview devoid of any kind of spiritual reality. The accompanying tendency to this worldview is to pragmatically seek after “what works,” which generally means medicating away the struggles in favor of giving the patients what temporary pleasures are possible in the face of their dysfunctional mental capacities. And of course, even materialism has its faith in the efficacy of its theories, a faith that does not go unquestioned even within the canons of science. Recent research shows, for example, that antidepressants work for as low as 30% of the depressed population, and that SSRIs in particular work only as well, or less, than placebos.¹⁶ Much remains unaccounted for, and science continues to do the best it can to account for depression and to treat it, usually with some combination of therapy and medication.

Still, even more radical views persist. According to Kramer in his recent book *Against Depression*, depression is a serious disease and should be classified as such. It essentially erodes the brain, causing “profound pain and impairment. It is syndromal – characterized by a reliable cluster of disabilities, such as sadness, appetite, and sleep abnormalities, and problems with memory and concentration. Depression progresses, in the fashion of a disease. With recurrence, depression's symptoms become more diverse and less responsive to treatment. Depressives die young. Depression runs in families.

¹⁵ See Cousens for detailed explanations of the dietary considerations, as well as excellent summaries of the various proteins and neurotransmitters needed by the brain to sustain healthy growth.

¹⁶ “Depression Statistics.” www.upliftprogram.com/depression_stats.html. 4/28/05

Depression is found in every culture.”¹⁷ He also lists premature aging as a major symptom of depression, and urges that our culture begin to take seriously the pathological nature of depression and work whole-heartedly for its elimination.

Kramer does not seem far off in his psychiatric prophecies. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), 15% of the populations of most developed countries suffer severe depression. As aforementioned, the 9.5% of the U.S. population suffers from depression, and 22.1% of Americans ages 18 or older suffer some form of mental disorder. It has recently been asserted that the rates of increase of depression in children is a whopping 23%, and equally as shocking is the accompanying fact that the fastest growing market for antidepressants is that of preschoolers (at least 4% of preschoolers are clinically depressed). Depression is the second largest killer after heart disease and results in more absenteeism than any other physical disorder, costing our national economy over \$51 billion in lost productivity.¹⁸

Nor does Princeton University emerge unscathed from depression’s sweep. According to unofficial estimates, over 40% of students will make use of the University’s Counseling and Psychological Services before they graduate. Over one-third of students arrive at campus already on some form of medication, and it is informally accepted that at least 33% of the campus suffers from some form of depression. When this writer attempted to contact the University’s new director of CPS, Dr. John Kolligian, he was unable to procure an interview, so great was the demand on his time from patients. In response to a 111% increase in inpatient stays and a 127% increase in inpatient admissions from 2003 to 2004 at McCosh Health Center for students suffering from depression¹⁹, the University Task Force on Health and Well Being issued this statement in their 2004 Interim Report as the most important needs of undergraduate students:

For undergraduate students, continuing attention to the need at Princeton (and other colleges and universities) for adequate, high quality and affordable mental health care, in particular for depression and suicidality.²⁰

¹⁷ Kramer, 50-51.

¹⁸ “Depression Statistics.” www.upliftprogram.com/depression_stats.html. 4/28/05. These statistics line up with those provided by the NIMH on their website, www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/numbers.cfm.

¹⁹ “Interim Report of the Task Force on Health and Well-Being January 2004.”

www.princeton.edu/hwptf_interim_report.doc, 6.

²⁰ Ibid, 20.

Director of University Health Services Dr. Daniel Silverman went on record saying that McCosh Health Center and in particular the CPS are “straining at the seams” to handle to increased volume of mental health care needs over the past year.²¹ These strains include a 17% increase in the use of counseling services by students, a 25% increase in psychiatric visits, a 33% increase in consultations, a 46% increase in after-hours care, and 18 reported off-campus hospitalizations for depression-related suicides and psychotic episodes in 2004 alone.²² And even such striking numbers fail to do justice to the reality that so many of us witness and encounter every day in the dorms and out at the Street, especially around Dean’s Date and thesis time. Clearly, there is some correlation between high levels of stress and anxiety, neuroresilience factors and culture, and deeper spiritual unrest. Whatever its causes, the demon of depression is more than a phantom theory; the effects of its black winds can be seen throughout the dark wood of reality.

Spiritual Supermen

Despite its alleged prevalence, our culture carries a marked stigma against depression, reflected by some rather shocking numbers. It is estimated that 80% of depressed people are not currently having any treatment, not even counseling or psychotherapy! 30% of women are depressed, and yet 41% of them are too embarrassed to seek help. The fact that only half as many men are diagnosed as depressed surely stems from a similar discomfort. 92% of African American males do not seek treatment, and given this lack of treatment, it is no wonder that 15% of depressed people will attempt suicide. All this most likely stems from the belief held by 54% of people that depression is a form of personal weakness. As Andrew Solomon writes, “the psychological supermodel of the twenty-first century is even more dangerous than the physical one. People are constantly examining their own minds and rejecting their own moods.”²³

The tendency towards “tough guy syndrome” stems in part from an American culture that came to birth under the Protestant work-ethic with a healthy diet of Puritan

²¹ Maugeri, Alexander. “CPUC focuses on health task force report.” www.dailyprincetonian.com/archives/2004/05/05/news/10514.shtml.

²² “Interim...” 6.

²³ Solomon, 26.

theology that reminded one of her own utter depravity before a perfect and holy God. If we note any sign of physical degradation or weakness in our apocalypse-thirsty age, many of us are all too quick to ask, as Jesus' disciples once did, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2b) We live in the age of the image, and those who fail to live up to the standards of external perfection denoted by a consumer culture of competition and cultivation are demonized, often treated as modern-day lepers who stifle others' mad quest for pragmatic joy and momentary hedonism. And so, many mask their symptoms and simply try to "tough it out," failing to take the first step in any recovery program, that of admitting that one has a problem.

Nor does the over-spiritualizing of depression help much. In reaction to a therapeutic culture and a materialist-reductionist school of psychiatry, spiritual people of all schools have sought to provide alternative answers in hopes of maintaining a more authentic existence for their souls. Some, like the American craze for all things Eastern, has led to a massive increase in alternative medicine and the practice of Yoga and other meditations. There is no way to measure the overall effect these remedies have had in combating depression, though they often tend to de-emphasize the reality of suffering in favor of calling it an illusory misconception of the mind.

Far more dangerous, and often-times violent, is the tendency of some Christian psychologists to reduce all depression to a product of some personal sin in an individual's life. In its more radical forms, Biblical counseling can lead to an unintentional mind-spirit dualism, as well as excessive and unnecessary marginalization of the mystery of human suffering in favor of an all-too-homocentric picture of man's sin and depravity as the root cause of his own plight. If you are depressed, you must have done something to deserve it. Note the words of the founder of the Biblical Counseling movement, Jay Adams, in describing depression:

Although depression is a terribly debilitating problem that is far too widespread
Among Christians as well as those who do not know God, it is not so
Difficult a problem to solve as at first it might seem to be.
What you need to recognize is that depression comes as a result of a
Failure of self-control and self-discipline. One work of the Holy Spirit
Of God is to produce such discipline in those who, by faithful obedience
To His Word, seek to please God by doing what He says rather than doing
What they feel like doing (cf. Galatians 5:23). This is at the heart of the matter.²⁴

²⁴ Adams, Jay. *What Do You Do When You Become Depressed?* Phillipsburg, PA: P&R Publishing, 1975, pamphlet.

Adams identifies some key symptoms of depression, and as we shall see it is essential to see that sin plays a major role in depression, as it does in all disease and decay of the creation. However, in their focus on discipline and self-control, Adams and others tend to commit the same mistake as those hard-line scientists, reducing a multi-faceted, mysteriously spiritual phenomenon, to the simple mechanics of humanity, whether they be physiological or behavioral. In addition, Adams fails to take into account any research having to do with genetics or real physical elements of depression, tending rather to call upon the individual to engage in the hard work of lifting oneself up by one's psychological boot-straps. Adam's method shows just as much depression on behalf of the counselor as with the depressed, because it shows a failure of compassion and of love. The demon need not have possessed you to have taken you in its grip.

While it is true that in our instant messenger culture we would do well to work for a greater emphasis on the virtues of discipline and self-control, telling a depressed person experiencing the symptoms described by Kramer above may be like telling a man with a broken leg to run a marathon. By placing too much emphasis on human capacity, the Biblical Counselor risks setting him or her up for a greater sense of despair and potentially greater mental damage in the event that they do not discover the perfectly balanced spiritual formula of prayer and good works. And by attaching a sense of failure to the individual, Adams' system also sets him up for future separation and shunning from the community of those who are deemed "more powerful," those who fall prey to the rubric of the secular notion of the "psychological supermodel." This is not at all to deny the efficacy and power of prayer, but rather taking steps towards identifying a more accurate understanding of the Gospel by which we can engage in even more powerful prayers centered not in our own strength, but in that of the Spirit of Grace. Such prayers are needed all the more in the face of the demons of this age.

Towards a Third Way

So far, we have taken a brief and much-too-hurried tour of the landscape of depression. We have received several glimpse of its vast and dangerous terrain, from the vistas of personal testimony to the intricacies scientific theories and the challenges posed

by spirituality. Just so, we live in an age of fragments, a time of vignettes and pieces, a world in which the overarching stories of our existence have been broken up into multitudes of competing absolutes, all vying for our patronage like children selling trinkets as we continue to travel through this strange new world in the middle of this vast cosmos. How are we to begin to piece them together again? Where do we begin to synthesize the various viewpoints and facts into an understanding that tells us not simply WHAT our demon seems to be, but WHY he has such power, and HOW we are to overcome him? Where shall we go, and to whom?

The images of Andrew Solomon once again begin to fashion a faint outline of how we might begin to think more expansively and effectively about how to combat the noonday demon. In a strikingly confessional passage, Solomon, who struggles to this day with his own depression, shares from his experience:

My depression had grown on me as that vine had conquered the oak; it had been a sucking thing, wrapping itself around me, ugly and more alive than I. It had had a life of its own that bit by bit asphyxiated all of my life out of me... I was not strong enough to stop breathing. I knew then that I could never kill this vine of depression, and so all I wanted was for it to let me die. But it had taken from me the energy I would have needed to kill myself, and it would not kill me. If my trunk was rotting, this thing that fed on it was now too strong to let it fall; it had become an alternative support to what it had destroyed...every second of being alive hurt me...

I have said that depression is both a birth and a death. The vine is what is born. The death is one's own decay, the cracking of the branches that support the misery. The first thing that goes is happiness. You can not gain pleasure from anything. That's famously the cardinal symptom of major depression. But soon other emotions follow happiness into oblivion: sadness as you have known it, the sadness that seemed to have led you here; your sense of humor; your belief in and capacity for love...eventually, you are simply absent from yourself.²⁵

The image of the deadly, foreign vine that eventually develops a symbiotic with the once-healthy oak provides a fascinating metaphor for our understanding of depression, as well as a potential meeting point for the materialist and spiritualist hypotheses. What if depression has both physical and spiritual causes, but that as it grows and overwhelms a tree that is too weak to resist, it grows, damaging that tree and crippling it until it can no longer stand on its own, until the root causes of the vine become nutrients upon which the tree is now dependent for its very existence? What if depression is like that, tormenting

²⁵ Solomon, 18-19.

us like a demon, begging for our souls, until one day, worn down and weak, we make the fateful decision to give in, to accept temptation, to become possessed, and to wander away to live among the tombs?

As Solomon mentioned earlier in this paper, every depression is unique, personal, and subjective. As one becomes more and more depressed, one comes to define oneself by their depression more and more, even as the tree cannot stand without the vine. One forgets how to stand on one's own, and cut off from the life-giving sun, one forgets that there was ever something more than shadow. Depressions are like snow-flakes; each is unique and individual; each has its own tempting beauty in the eyes of its beholder, a beauty composed of a thousand jagged edges and sharp points which threaten to lacerate one's soul even as we marvel at the beauty that our shredded soul could create from its pain. If sin were not the root cause of depression, than the forgetfulness that turns our hearts towards the demon as the source of our strength certainly constitutes a sinful response.

Biblical psychologist Ed Welch, in his article "Counseling those who are Depressed," offers a conceptual framework for viewing depression from this third-way vantage point. He writes that "the working theory of depression is that it can result from any spiritual problem that has been given time to ferment."²⁶ For Welch, "psychiatric problems are always spiritual problems and sometimes physical problems;"²⁷ being physically disposed towards depression only increases the need to be ready to cope with spiritual, and, if necessary, biochemical defenses. But ultimately, for both Welch and Solomon, depression is a demon that involves suffering, and this means that it also involves a mystery, "just as there is ultimate mystery at the end of all human investigations."²⁸ As is often taught in seminaries, science, and indeed all of human observation, can answer questions of "how," but unaided by revelation, they can never hope to discern the answers to the questions of "why" that accompany the mysteries of creation, including the mystery of human suffering.

²⁶ Welch, Edward T. "Counseling Depression." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* Volume 18, Number 2, January 2000, 21.

²⁷ Welch, Edward T. *Blame it on the Brain: Distinguishing Between Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience*. Phillipsburg, PA: P&R Publishing, 1998, 106.

²⁸ Welch, *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*, 43.

As Christians, whose worldview is centered around the Gospel of Jesus Christ, His life, death and resurrection, we are blessed in that God has not left us without an answer in His Holy Scripture. In a world that seems to echo Solomon's cry from the heart of Scripture, "meaningless, meaningless, all is meaningless," in which we unexpectedly find ourselves the kings of our world and the owner of all earthly riches and pleasures, we also hear that primal cry that longs for the eternity that God has placed in our hearts (Ecc. 3:11b). This cry is echoed by King David, who in Psalm 32, sings:

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away
Through my groaning all the day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
My strength was sapped
As in the heat of summer.
Then I acknowledged my sin to you
And did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord-"
And you forgave the guilt of my sin.
(Psalm 32:3-5)

From the very heart of Scripture, we hear the voices of Solomon and David, the former steeped in the science of human experience and wisdom of every kind, the latter a man after God's own heart. They can serve for us here as types for the materialist and the spiritualist worldviews, and with the confessions of the Princetonian, they form a haunting picture of the world made over in the image of the demon of depression. Yet the common thread running through their works is the mystery of human suffering, coupled with a profound sense of the need for God in the midst of a personal cosmos that cannot hold together without Him. The world is created; the world is fallen. The world needs to be redeemed. There is evidence in all that we have said this far that our relationship with the He who is the source of Life seems fractured, damaged in some way. In the second section of this paper, we will turn in faith to the Gospel in hopes of finding the true liberation that can only come from above.

Part II

WHY We Suffer; HOW We are Redeemed

In the face of a world where the demon depression seems to reign so thoroughly and completely, where the kudzu of his terrible grip pervades not an entire university and an entire culture, but also seeps his way into the Church itself, we as those who affirm faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must seek to deepen our understanding of the Gospel so that we can apply it in our engagement with a broken world, and be better prepared to announce its healing message to those in search of a light in the midst of these dark times.

As we have already seen, depression, along with so many other maladies and evils, helps to remind us that something is not right with the world. Everything, from our culture to our relationships right down to our brain cells and our very genes, seems out of place, suffering under a weight too great to carry on its own. We saw above in Psalm 32 how some of this suffering can be directly related to sins we have committed. But how are we to explain the suffering of so many innocents, of the woman whose brain is simply less resilient to the endless streams of information that flood our airwaves and that overwhelm her finite brain with knowledge too infinite for mortal minds to handle? Or, for that matter, how are we to account for any innocent suffering whatsoever? Our hearts will not settle for the determinist picture given by the materialists in which our suffering has no meaning. Nor can we accept, any more than Job could accept, that the innocent suffer for sins they have not committed.

However, in the face of our protests, St. Paul reminds us with great firmness and compassion, quoting King David, that “there is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, together they have become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:10b-12) As he later states in this same letter, “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned;” (5:12b) the evil and suffering we encounter in this world, indeed, depression itself are not causes at all, but symptoms of the deeper, fallen state of creation that we call sin. As St. Paul continues, “the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the

one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (8:19-21) Sin is the condition of the fallen world, and one of the many forms it takes is that of suffering and death. By recovering the notion that depression is part of the multiformity of sin as a condition, and not only of sin as a consequence of personal action, we see that even before we first acted in any kind of way, virtuous or rebellious, something is fundamentally broken in the relationship between God and the whole of His creation.

Depression: A Detour in the Wilderness

There is only one Original sin; all other sins are thoroughly unoriginal recapitulations of that first turning of Adam away from his dependence and trust in his Creator towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The Bible never mentions the word “depression;” however, God in His mercy has not left us without insights in His Holy Scripture for understanding and overcoming this demon, along with a promise to lead us home when we have wandered astray in the dark valleys of our own pride and sin.

Near the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses is giving a reinterpretation of the Law of God, the Torah, that he had received upon Sinai, just as he is about to ascend the mountain to leave Israel as they prepare to cross the River Jordan into the Promised Land. This is a crucial moment for Israel, who is about to enter Canaan after forty years of penitential wandering in the desert. As Moses reaches the climax of his farewell address, the most important section, he takes a strange but important turn. In Chapter 28, he begins by reminding Israel of the blessings she will receive for obedience to the Law. But then, he shifts gears and warns them of the curses under which they will fall for turning away from God. Because the Law served as a mediating force between Eternal God and finite man, any violation of the Law was seen as damaging to the relationship, thus holding dire consequences. Moses says as much in verse 14 when he reminds Israel, “do not turn aside from any of these commandments I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.” A breach in relationship with God is hence seen here as nothing short of idolatry, a violation of the First Commandment, and a grasp for self-governance.

As he rattles off curse after curse, Moses begins to describe some symptoms that should sound all too familiar to the reader of this paper. “The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you had done in forsaking Him,” says Moses in verse 20; “The Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind,” he cries in verse 28; “the sights you see will drive you mad.” (28:34) But the most terrible curse of all is reserved for the end, at the very climax of the speech at the pinnacle of its curses:

Then the Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods – gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, “if only it were evening,” and in the evening, “if only it were morning” – because of the terror of the sights your eyes will see. The Lord will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you. (Deuteronomy 28:64-68)

Dread. An anxious mind. A despairing heart. Nights and days filled with suspense. Bondage to a foreign gods, abandonment to foreign powers. Exile from one’s home, one’s Promised Land, the place from which Israel derived its national identity and the basis of its covenant love with Yaweh. At such an important moment for Israel, Moses reminds them in advance that not only will they be unable to avoid the sin of idolatry, but that one of the forms that sin and death will take is that which we call in modern times the disease of depression. The result of a ruptured relationship with God as a symptom of the human condition of sin is depression. Scripture could not be clearer; we are to group depression as part of the multiformity of sin, under which the earth groans and the people of God are enslaved in exile, estranged from their land and from their Creator, lost in a cosmos of strange people of strange tongues, physically and existentially unhinged from all meaning and significance. Depression is but one fruit of the Tree of Eden; it is God’s way of reminding us that all is not right with the world.

But Moses does not stop there. Just as Christ gave us a two-fold commandment to love God and love our neighbor, so too does sin work in a two-fold way to corrode and damage those very same relationships. In Chapter 29, God begins to reveal how His

people might restore and renew their covenant with Him before entering Egypt. He reminds them of the “detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold” that they saw among the Egyptians (verse 17). Then, he issues a command, saying,

Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison. (Deuteronomy 29:18)

The presence of sin in the midst of the beloved community of Israel, which is the type, the shadow, the prefiguration of the Church, must result in violence and dissolution of that community. Just as the Princetonian experienced isolation from his family and friends, the people of Moses are forced to turn in violence upon their neighbor to weed out any and all sin from their midst. Sin, in all its multiformity, by undermining our relationship with God, naturally leads to the destruction of our ability to love and tolerate our neighbor and his difference in our midst. Under the old covenant, there is no mercy, only death.

The turning towards self exhibited first in Adam’s sin and later in the idolatry of Israel constitutes what St. Ignatius Loyola called “spiritual desolation.” St. Ignatius described this state of being as a dissatisfaction in prayer, and a lack of any sense of peace, reassurance or the presence of God. He identified this feeling of being withdrawn or alienated from God and turned in on one’s self. “It happens when I am determined to put my faith in earthly things, or shut God out of some area of my life.”²⁹ This same desolation can occur either at the individual level, or at the corporate level, as we see here with Israel and idolatry. Desolation is what depression leaves in its wake as its currents of sin attempt to sweep us away from our focus on God towards a focus on ourselves. Living in a narcissistic postmodern culture in which idols abound and individualism reigns, we will never cease to find an increasing multitude of forms of sin. Like a virus, sin uses depression to spread its fruits throughout every aspect of self and of culture. In our Information Age, it is the very obsession with knowledge that often leads to the excessive media overloading of our brains; images, ideas, multimedia presentations and ceaseless flashing images bombard our neurons like bombs over Baghdad, poisoning weak minds like the toxic pesticides with which we cover our fields in hopes of raising

²⁹ In *Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2005*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2004, 218.

bigger, better, more succulent fruits. Ironically, in our quest for new frontiers, new knowledge, and eternal life, we can only do as much as to recapitulate that first act of information idolatry, the sin of Adam; and with each recapitulation, with each new plucking of the fruit in hopes of elevating ourselves, we only perpetuate the very condition of sinfulness that afflicts us, and destroys our neighbors, sending us into a deeper exile from ourselves, our neighbors, and our God.

But remember what St. Paul said in Romans? The frustration under which the creation groans was given in hopes of its redemption. God knows His people, and through Moses He warns them that He knows they are bound to sin, that they cannot help but sin. And yet, even as early as Moses, He chooses to end His message to His people on a Word of hope. For Moses says to the people:

Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.(Deuteronomy 30:4-6)

In this bittersweet moment of depression and hope, God promised redemption to His people. He promises to reach beyond even His people's helpless incapacity to do good, to come down and enter their hearts, to give them the help they need to love Him with every ounce of their beings. He promises them the means to "be strong and courageous," (31:6), and to "choose life."(30:19b) The demons and the idols do not get the final word. The people will sin. Depression will be a reality. But there will be a redeemer.

Our Broken Hope

Over a thousand years later, St. Paul reveals the fulfillment of Moses' promise in Jesus Christ. Just as Moses lifted up a brazen serpent on a pole to offer healing to all who looked upon it with faith, so too God raised up His own son on the Cross as a promise of redemption to all those who turned from their sin to Him in faith. As St. Paul writes in Galatians:

All who rely on observing the Law are under a curse, for it is written, 'cursed is everyone who does not do everything written in the Book of the Law.' Clearly, no one is justified before God by the Law, because 'the righteous shall live by faith/' The Law is not based on faith; on the contrary, 'the

Man who does these things will live by them.’ Christ redeemed us from the Curse of the Law becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is Everyone who is hung on a tree.’ He redeemed us in order that the blessing Given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that By faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (Gal. 3:10-14)

As St. Paul argued above in Romans, no man is capable of good on his own; it is only when he ceases to do good by his own efforts and turns in faith to the saving work of God in Christ that He finds true justification and righteousness. Moses promised his people that their hearts would be circumcised; this is the same circumcision of the Spirit proclaimed at the end of this passage, the claiming of the blessing of Abraham, the advent of the new covenant sealed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ when He became a curse and took all of our sin upon Him that we might be free of it, and free to receive the transforming power of His life-giving Spirit. Like the bread broken and the wine poured in the Eucharist, at Golgotha Christ offers us Himself, body and blood, that our relationship to the Father might be restored, and we might have hope in the midst of and in spite of our sufferings.

How do we know that our depression has been redeemed, that God works through and in spite of depression to bring us into community with Himself and with our neighbor? How can we believe this Gospel to be true? Is Jesus really the one spoken of in Isaiah, sent

to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.
(Isaiah 61:2-3)

In Christ, God promises to replace the depressed person's spirit of despair with His Holy Spirit, not as an instant cure for one's ills, but rather as the starting point, the means with which to cast off the choking vine of anxiety and to become oaks of righteousness, planted in the Lord's covenant promises and watered by His precious and holy blood.

Let us see how such a miracle of grace has been accomplished, how the Savior extends His embrace of love to those who are weary with grief.

Our Savior *knew* depression, probably far deeper than even the Princetonian or King Solomon could possibly imagine. Out of His great love for His creation, He allowed Himself to leave the infinite, endless beauty of the perfections of heaven to become incarnate by the Virgin Mary. Reader, think of the most horrible scene you have witnessed in your life. Perhaps it was seeing the horrors of intertribal warfare portrayed in the movie *Hotel Rwanda*. Or perhaps memories of seeing *Schindler's List*, or pictures of child prostitutes in Bombay haunt your vision. Think of the absolute worst days of your depression, the darkest hell you can conjure up in the depths of your imagination. There is so much evil in this world that we can hardly find the wonder to be appalled any more. But imagine descending from a place of ultimate perfection, sitting in the very bosom of the Almighty and Everloving Father, surrounded by the worship of angel songs and the sounds of perfect harmony. Now try to imagine what it would be like to descend into time, to be hung upon a cross, abandoned by your own Father and all your friends, imagine coming to be among your beloved creations only to find that once they find out who you are, they cannot wait to maim, torture, mutilate and torture you. Imagine bearing the weight of all of the worst horrors all the generations of your family have every seen, and imagine bearing these times infinity all in a single moment, subjected to the discord of jeers, weeping, and cracking bones. This was the plight of the Man of Sorrows. Perhaps even trying to envision such things will prepare us to appreciate the full weight of the message of the writer of Hebrews:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

If anyone was ever justified in feeling depressed, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, as we shall see, He took the opportunity to make of His very brokenness the means to our salvation; His scars became the conduits of our lifeblood; His outstretched palms became the hands that offered us God's grace.

Such was the state in which we find Our Lord on the hill of Golgotha on His final day. Here He was, nearing the end of His race. But the agony of the flogging, the pain of the humiliation at the hands of the guard, the pounding of the blood vessels in His punctured brow, the grueling trek up Calvary under the weight of the cross, none of these horrors was even a dim memory compared to the agony of being hung upon that cross, the agony we hear expressed as the Lord of the Universe cried out, “eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) Jesus is left hanging, a curse upon a tree, utterly alone, abandoned even by His Father in Heaven. Left ringing in His ears are the words of His Father, spoken to the Old Adam, “it is not good that the man should be alone;” there He hung, the New Adam, alone. Even his best friends were nowhere to be seen; St. Matthew even tells us that those who were there watched only “from a distance.” (27:55) Like the people of Israel, Christ is cut off from all human community.

But far worse still is the ultimate pain of being separated from His heavenly community, and being estranged from Himself. Lest we forget, God is a Trinity of being, three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For Jesus then to feel separation from the Father is not only to be left alone by the one He trusted enough to call Abba, the one in whom He had placed all of His hope and all the hopes of mankind, the one who in never sinning He had never failed once in His entire life of humble obedience and servanthood – no, to be cut off from the Father, for Jesus, was also to be utterly cut off from His own being, from His own identity, from His own Self. In every possible Way Jesus was completely and utterly subjected to an experience of existential angst that surpassed all of His physical sufferings by leaps and bounds. On that hill outside Jerusalem, God Himself felt despair; Jesus Christ was gripped by the hand of the angel of death, the demon of depression. In the words of the old song, “sometimes it causes me to tremble.”

But in that same cry, Jesus gives us a model of hope. When He cried out to His Father, Jesus was praying the first line of Psalm 22, a psalm which later exclaims, “for He has not despised or disdained the suffering of His afflicted one; He has not hidden His face from Him but has listened to His cry for help.” (22:24) Notice, Jesus does not disdain His suffering, nor does God look upon Jesus suffering with enmity, as He would have done in the Old Covenant, as the people of Jerusalem did, looking upon the cursed

criminal upon the filthy Roman cross. In what seems a cry of dereliction, we witness at the same time a most tender moment between Father and Son, a moment when in spite of pain and in spite of despair, the Christ shows us that it is ok to hope, that it is possible to believe. And at the same time, the Father shows us that He never leaves nor forsakes us, that He does not disdain our sin or our brokenness, that we must never be afraid to come to Him in prayer. Even before His resurrection, Jesus reveals to us the true character of the God of Grace.

And on that hill of Calvary, through His depression and despair, Jesus Christ reconciled all men to God, and to their neighbors, making possible the restoration of the relationships that were fractured and distorted because of sin. Therein lies the hope of the Gospel, as the writer of Hebrews tells us:

We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now
Crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that
By the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. In bringing
Many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom
Everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through
Suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and the those who are
Made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them
Brothers. (Hebrews 2:9-11)

Jesus was made perfect through His suffering because He was able to find compassion for His fellow man. He did not do so by standing above mankind in His perfection and demanding that they raise themselves up to His standards, as the spiritualists sometimes do. Rather, He came to found a new family of man and God together, and He did so by suffering depression and despair that He might be better able to bear the weight of that sin to the Father to act as an advocate for those who also continue to struggle with those same symptoms of sin to this day. Just as we fell through Adam, we have all been given grace in Jesus Christ, who tasted death for everyone. He made possible for us a hope in spite of and in the midst of, but not necessarily instead of, suffering. When God despaired of losing His relationship to His children because of their hopeless sinfulness, He became one of them to show His love. God's depression results in the Incarnation of the Gospel in the person of the Living Christ.

As the suffering servant, Christ suffers with us and along side us, offering us the perfect model of ministry and of a life of lived love. The word *sufferre* in Latin means "to carry," and the word compassion means "to suffer with." Even as we suffer through

depression, even as He carries the burden of our guilt, Christ offers us Himself, through His Spirit, and asks only that we do the same for our suffering brothers and sisters. Seated at the right hand of the Father, Christ bears His scars to this day. He sits in glory, it is true, but He has literally redefined glory for us Christians, turning the very notion on its head. Jesus Christ, beaten physically and spiritually beyond recognition, forever shattered the idol of the psychological supermodel and the self-sufficient man. Jesus was not afraid to humble Himself to become a bloody wreck; God did not disdain Him for His ugliness. What an image for our image-obsessed postmodern culture and its endless obsessions with superficiality and appearance! God stripped Himself bare, naked of all auspices of divinity, and appeared torn, broken, ugly and depressed, and it is in this way that He announced the Gospel to the world. In the same way, He encourages us to be unafraid of our brokenness, to let it shine through, within and without, so that we may become ministers, wounded healers, perfect in compassion as Christ was perfect, for the sake of all humanity, and for the love of the Gospel.

Only Wounded Soldiers Serve

But of course, as Christians, we believe in a Resurrected Savior, and with His death on the cross, Jesus' healing ministry of redemption had only just begun. In Christ, the other side of suffering is resurrection. As we prepare to become healers and servants to the depressed, we must again turn to Jesus to learn from His example how we might use our own wounds, our own brokenness, to love and serve our brothers and sisters in perfect compassion.

St. John provides a textbook account of how to be a broken healer ministering to the depressed in the much loved story of Doubting Thomas. Thomas is often pigeon-holed as somehow being at extreme fault for not instantly believing in Christ's resurrection. But what if we tried to see things from his perspective for a moment? You, Thomas, have seen your savior, the one in whom all your trust was placed, crucified before your very eyes. You have endured weeks of grief and agony, and now that your purpose in living has died, a thick depression settles in. The other Apostles go out together, but you stay inside alone, grieving and weeping. Then suddenly one day, they all show up, shouting, "We have seen the Lord!" (John 20:25) You cannot stand to have

your hopes raised only to be dashed to the floor again in disappointment when you find that they were misplaced. Your grief blinds you, your despair is all you know.

Defensively, you snap back in reply, “until I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand in his side, I will not believe it.” (20:25b) Thomas, like so many of us who have suffered under the depression of this age, is not a skeptic; He wants to believe, but cannot find the will power to do so.

And yet, somehow, in spite of your fear, you find the courage to go with the others to dinner next time they go out. In spite of brokenness, you take a risk on the hope of finding Jesus. And there He is, walking through the wall, proclaiming peace! And far from reproaching Thomas for His disbelief, the Savior, ever-forgiving, acts as tenderly as His Father acted towards Him on the cross, extending His wounded hands to Thomas in a knowing gesture of trust. Jesus did not expect Thomas to believe in the way He demanded; rather, He reached out to where Thomas was, and what is more, He used His brokenness, His very scars and wounds, as a means to minister to His depressed friend. He did not hide these dreadful marks, did not ask the Father to resurrect Him minus the mutilations, but rather, unreservedly extended His own wounds as a means for another’s healing. I think it no coincidence that this scene is set at a meal time, as if to prefigure the Eucharistic meal, in which Christ asks only that we show up, and then promises to minister to us through the brokenness of His body and the spilling of His blood. The story of Doubting Thomas is a story for ministers as well as doubters; Jesus assures us here that even in our brokenness, even in the midst of our own disbelief and imperfection, wonders and miracles can still be wrought, and a deeper communion in the Body of Christ is still possible.

Throughout the remainder of His time on earth, the resurrected Christ continually provides us a model for ministry, demonstrating at every turn the relentless tenderness of our God. With Thomas He showed that each case of depression and suffering is individual, and requires that we act creatively and personally, using our own wounds as the basis of compassion in tailoring our ministry to meet each individual’s unique needs. But how does one discern these needs? By asking questions. Jesus Himself shows us the importance of reaching out to others, never assuming we know what their suffering, their depression is like until we hear from their own mouths how it is they are encountering

and interpreting their own pain. Again and again, Jesus asks tender yet probing questions. In John 20:15, he asks Mary Magdalene, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it that you are looking for?” Upon encountering the disciples on the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24:17, he questions, “what are you discussing together as you walk along?” And to St. Paul, on the Road the Damascus, he confronts him with his sins, allowing him a chance to give us his own account of things as he booms, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4b) And finally, perhaps most memorably, on the shores of Galilee Christ confronts St. Peter, his dearest Apostle, with a chance to be reconciled and healed after the most bitter of betrayals, disarming all shame and depression with the simply yet persistent question, calling him by his true name, “Simon Son of John, do you love me?” (John 21:16) Confronting broken and hurting people, Jesus opens the doors to future joy again and again through His questions, meeting each individual where they are at, and helping them to discover their true identity in Himself.

Christ, in His brokenness, reaches out and asks questions of each individual, seeking to meet them where they are at. However, Jesus is not the God of cheap grace, and as we see in the cases of Ss. Peter and Paul, the two regarded as founding the Church, Jesus also confronts them with the reality of their sinful situations. Jesus’ compassion is perfect not because He loves His lambs instead of noticing their imperfections; rather, His grace is amazing because He loves *in spite* of our sins. In the midst of the healing process, Christ shows His deep love for His brothers, a love that includes both being broken Himself, while at the same time is unafraid to speak truthfully about the challenges of sin in each individuals lives. Rather than perpetuating the domination system of the perfect image we so commonly suffer under in today’s Christianity, Jesus points out His brothers’ sins in love, and hence provides a means for them to receive His forgiveness through their confession of their sins. As it is written in 1 John 1:8-9, “if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” As Christ had to be broken upon the cross to cover the sins of humanity, so too we must be willing to expose our sins to God and to our brothers and sisters for the purpose of reconciling with God and receiving the true grace of His forgiveness. It is this ability to come before God and one another, broken, as we are, but

challenged to trust in God, that leads St. John to conclude that “perfect love casts out all fear.” (1 John 4:18) We need not have anxiety any longer; we are free to begin to trust, to have hope, and hence, to begin to love God and our neighbors.

With the end of the Gospel accounts, we have come full circle from where we started, and we return once again to St. Paul’s letter to the Romans. Christ’s cross is the beginning of the reconciliation between God and our brothers and sisters; revealed as True God through His perfect compassion and His willingness to love us in spite of our complete degradation, Christ has fulfilled the prophesy of Moses in Deuteronomy 30, circumcising our hearts so that we may come to love Him more deeply. Who could forget St. Paul’s encouraging words:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of Childbirth right up to the present time. Not only we, who have the first-Fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption As sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the Same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we Ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that Words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind Of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will. And we know that all things work together for those who love Him, whoever have been called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:22-28)

The groanings of depression, in Christ, become the very birth pains that signal to us the potential to bring new life forth by the work of the Spirit! Even as we continue to love out the love of Christ in our lives and continue to advance His Kingdom against all the powers and forces of this present age, He has promised His Spirit to guide us, help us, and show us how to minister to those we encounter. Even our brokenness, our very imperfections and mistakes, become for the Spirit the raw materials with which He is making a new creation; we need not fear our short-comings or our sin, for by His Grace, they become for others the very Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. As playwright Thornton Wilder once wrote, “in love’s army only wounded soldiers serve.”

Part III

Becoming Broken Bread for Princeton

Like Our Savior, we can now emerge from the darkness of the tomb of our personal hell, not yet outwardly perfect, perhaps not healed, but prepared to do the redeeming work of the Kingdom of God, through and in spite of our brokenness. We have seen how depression, as part of the multiformity of sin, lies at the root of all suffering in our world, including depression. We have seen the widespread nature of the demon's dominion, especially at Princeton University. We have received a challenge from the Gospel to confront this reality with the Deeper Truth that Christ Himself has suffered depression, has overcome it on the cross, and has made it possible to hope in spite of all hopelessness, to love in spite of imperfection. How are we, the Manna Christian Fellowship, to begin responding to His call?

Challenges Facing the Church at Princeton

Perhaps the most important step of all is to recognize that yes, indeed, we have been called to confront and redeem the reality of depression. As we have seen, being Christian does not imply being unbroken. It does not mean *not* suffering, but rather confronts us with the resounding challenge, "how will you confront the imperfections in the world around you?" Christ's is a call that summons us out of the relative safety and stability of our close-knit communities into the world. We have already reviewed the statistics concerning Princeton. Anyone who has ever been out to the Street on a Saturday night, who has heard a roommate stumbling through the door drunk, who has passed a slouched-over, awkward-looking classmate dressed all in black, anyone who has argued with an atheist in precept has received the call to missions, the vocation to confront depression in the brokenness of the world. Jesus Himself went out among the tax-collectors; Jesus Himself went out looking for each of us, and found us at the cross.

Our greatest gifts usually provide our strongest temptations, and the Manna Christian Fellowship is no exception to that rule. We have been greatly blessed with a family of brothers and sisters who are known across the campus for the ways in which we love and care for one another. Our four-year Small Group program, along with our big sib-little sib activities and our frequent prayer meetings and Large Group worship

sessions all provide opportunities for people to experience intimacy with one another and with Christ, and it is to me no surprise that given this level of care and concern, our fellowship has been relatively unplagued by any major bouts of depression. Strong relationships grounded in the Lord of Life cannot be easily torn asunder by the passing spirits of this age.

However, given the exegesis above and the state of current affairs at the University, I believe we can always be challenging ourselves to search our hearts and seek ways to confess communal sins in the hopes of becoming even more strengthened in Christ's love. There are still brothers and sisters in our midst who struggle violently with depression, and who do not easily fit into the upbeat and cheery atmosphere so prevalent on Saturday evenings. Often unintentionally, the less vocal among us, as well as shy new-comers looking for answers and unsure guests of members trying to understand the Kingdom, are lost in the shuffle of joy and excitement. I cannot say whether this happens unintentionally, or is in part a way of avoiding those who remind us of our own weaknesses, both as individuals and as a community, those who challenge us to grow, to give up our own conception of comfort for the surpassing joy of knowing Christ Jesus in the alien, the stranger.

I would like to challenge our community to continue to take this matter in prayer throughout the year, asking God to show us ways that we can overcome the temptation to become spiritual and psychological supermodels, obsessed with our outward looks and disciplined mental pedigrees, while inwardly dying away because we are failing to do the work of the Kingdom. A Christian community that thrives on exclusivism, cliquishness, and a false notion of perfection not rooted in the compassion of the cross is more rightly a reflection of the postmodern university culture and its Eating Club system than it is the of true body of Christ. Again, Manna has been given exceptional gifts of community and friendship; my prayer is that we continue to ask God to allow us to give these gifts back to Him, so that He may give us as Manna to feed the hungry who still wander in the exile of sin and depression in the trying wilderness of campus life.

We live in a time and place where our minds are constantly subjected to the powers of this world. Our hearts and souls are the battlefields of Satan's guerilla forces, and especially of the demon depression. We are constantly being bombarded with

information and stimulation, along with the temptations of consumerism that seek to transform us into the products of our own impulses. It is my belief that man was not made for so much stimulation any more than he was originally made to eat the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil; both bring death when eaten from illegally. It is far too easy to succumb to the temptation to simply “do our own thing,” do head off in the direction of what fits our own “personal relationship with God,” while forgetting our obligations to the community both within and without the Kingdom borders.

In light of the very real presence of spiritual warfare and evil on this campus, I would also like to challenge the Manna community to continue to take seriously its daily prayer meetings, both its liturgical ones in the morning, and its popcorn-style ones in the afternoon. I would like to encourage the prayer leaders to consider making space for a regular time of confession at each of these sessions, not so that we may be reminded of how awful we are, nor so that we will have a dumping ground for unsightly sins and morbid speculations, but rather that we may be reminded together of our call to brokenness, that we may foster an environment in which Manna members feel more welcome to share their struggles with one another openly, and so that as a community, we may receive the grace of God and be reminded of He upon whom all grace is contingent.

Which leads to perhaps my most important prescription: we must become a community of brokenness. By this I do not mean that we should be any less joyful, that we should worship with less zeal or laugh with less ardor. Nor do I mean by brokenness that we ought only to share our struggles. By no means! Rather, in working to become a community that is more and more comfortable expressing both our struggles and our joys all year long, and not merely at retreats or special dinners, we also open the door to sharing the comforts we have received, and create new potential to share the stories we witness of God’s life-changing love.

St. Paul is constantly exhorting us to do this very thing. He does not hesitate to share with us the immense joy he feels towards the Philippian church, or the discontent he feels at the Corinthians’ double-dealings. But in saying that our lives are not our own, St. Paul is reminding us that even our sufferings and our imperfections, even our brokenness, must be offered up in service to the Church:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our

troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. (2 Cor. 1:3-11)

Paul shares in graphic detail how he too encountered a moment of depression and despair as he was confronted by the hardships of being abroad in a hostile world, of being disoriented from his heart's true home at rest in Christ. And yet, he uses this opportunity as a chance to teach the Corinthians about their own call to share in one another's sufferings, that they may also share in the comfort that God grants them by His grace. In a way, we should seek to be like the Mosaic community of Deuteronomy 32, a community that is unafraid to tell stories of redemption, of falling away, of struggle, and of the triumph attained in every case through the work of Christ's Holy Spirit. If we do not share in one another's sorrows, how can we possibly share in the fullness of one another's joy?

In embracing our brokenness, as we shed the communal image of the psycho-spiritual supermodel, we will find ourselves as bread that is broken and given for the life of others. It is in this way that we can, in Rilke's phrase, "love God into being." In that same letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul again paints a picture of what the true Body of Christ looks like on earth:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. (2 Cor. 4:7-12)

Notice St. Paul does not say "perplexed but not in despair;" rather, he affirms the struggles through which his companions and he go while also affirming the grace of God

in spite of the hardship. These Christians *are* pressed on every side, perplexed, persecuted, struck down; they carry in their bodies the death of Jesus, in all of its brokenness and glory. *This* is the model of the Church's life on earth, always being given over to suffering that we might learn to have compassion on others through the endurance we receive from the Holy Spirit. This is the answer to the mystery of suffering; not certainty, but the process of learning to suffer with others, the process of compassion, which is our progress in perfection. As St. Paul exhorts the Galatians, "carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2) The Law of the Old Covenant stood for perfection, impossibility, death. The Law of Christ, which is the Law of the Spirit, stands for compassion, brokenness, and eternal life.

Finally, while it is indeed important to embrace our brokenness, it appears to me that oftentimes the Church at Princeton is broken in all the wrong ways. While we need to learn to be broken as Christ's body was broken, we must also learn to be unified, even as a single rock of living water flowed in the desert under Moses' staff, even as a single cup of Christ's Blood sealed the New Covenant of the forgiveness of sins. It is essential to fight the culture of the image at Princeton by allowing ourselves to provide a context in which we can explore and embrace our brokenness; however, as a Church, our communities must not fall prey to the other extreme, that is, reflecting the fragmented nature of our postmodern institutions by being ourselves fragmented and divided. This is not the place to launch into an extended exploration of the Scriptures' exhortations to Church unity; suffice it to say that in a world in which depression and discord reign, in which the very cells of our brains are straining at the seams to stay together, having a visibly unified Body of Christ on campus serves as a powerful witness to both Christians and non-Christians alike that brokenness need not be something that divides, but can bring us together around the table of the Lamb's Supper. If we are to be broken bread, we must also be the poured out wine of the Holy Spirit, and to do this we must strive for ecumenism among all of the campus fellowship groups. This is not an option, and we sin against the Holy Spirit whenever we remain at enmity with our brothers and sisters at Christ, just as we sin when we partake of the Eucharist with a divided heart.

In times of darkness and despair, we must follow our Savior's model, who despairing at the loss of relationship between His creation and Himself, became Incarnate

in the visible and tangible presence of the Christ. As a Eucharistic community, we can overcome the rampant individualism that tears apart the Church, keeping it shamefully broken on the communal level while fearing brokenness at the level of personal relationships. We ourselves can become the bread and wine that is given for many for the forgiveness of sins; but first, we must take seriously the example set forth by the Lord Jesus Christ, in His life, death, and in His resurrection. I believe the Manna Christian Fellowship has been a leader in all of these areas, and so offer these suggestions partly as criticisms, but also as exhortations to continue the good work that Christ has begun in us as we continue to develop, and especially to engage our Gospel worldview.

Feeding the Depressed

It should be evident by now that I am not a scientist, let alone a psychologist or even a trained theologian. I am reticent to offer any suggestions as to how to deal practically with depression itself, especially since every depression *is* so unique, and requires the creation of unique and loving relationships to help free the oppressed from the grip of the demon. I wish that in reading this or some more aptly written paper about the Gospel would be enough to loosen the grip of depression long enough to let the sufferer glimpse the light of grace that is waiting for them. I know from my own personal struggles, and failures, that this is often more a dream and a hope than an immediate reality.

Hence, rather than offering up any normative or prescriptive suggestions, I would like to share, very briefly, some things that we can do at the community level that God has used to minister to me and to others like me effectively in times of depression. However, if you know someone who suffers from depression, especially at a very serious and intense level, I strongly urge you to first seek out the advice of a staff member, or to go to David. They can help you to discern whether or not the nature of the depression merits a visit to professional help, and there are several well-trained Biblical and secular counselors in the Princeton area. I would also recommend contacting Pastor David Rowe at Westerly Road Church, who has a background in counseling and is more than happy to assist individuals, especially students.

As we have seen above both from our encounter with the Princetonian and from the example of Jesus, perhaps the greatest ministry you can provide to the depressed is simply to listen, to try and understand just how it is the other is experiencing their depression and pain. If necessary, ask any questions you need to in order to be able to enter into their world, and if at all possible, avoid giving any explanations just for the sake of filling space. Oftentimes, a friend who seeks your ear in the midst of depression is not looking for answers, as chances are he or she has already thought through all the angles; rather, they are looking for someone to suffer with them, to listen, who will not abandon them or write them off as crazy. Being around the depressed can be especially challenging and often energy-draining, so make sure to enter into discussions with a lot of prayer, and commit to the patience of Christ before hand. People who are especially shy or awkward or who are afraid of being rejected are also, incidentally, less likely to approach you to talk, though they are brimming over with the hopes that you will ask them. Reach out in love, risk having your own comfortable foundations shaken, and if things get too harsh, offer to continue the conversation later on, and then commit to a time and place. The depressed know that they talk a lot. They will understand. Alternatives are better than protests.

As you ask questions, try to discern the HOWS and WHATS of an individual's circumstances. Many times, someone suffering from an episode of depression may have been sleeping irregularly, or is perhaps failing to eat enough food to power their body. These factors, lack of sleep and nutrition, are especially prevalent at Princeton University, and challenging a friend to get on a healthier schedule, and then committing to helping them stay on that schedule, even offering to exercise with them, can mean the difference between a quick recovery and a major episode that can cause permanent damage and lead to a lifetime of struggle.

Along with dietary and fitness habits, it is helpful to examine other aspects of the person's lifestyle. Do they, for example, spend a lot of time listening to depressing music, obsessing over depressive lyrics on their web log, or watch movies and TV shows that contribute to a sense of self-pity or self-centeredness? Is your friend prone to impulsive buying sprees or compulsive behaviors? How are their relationships with other people, or with God? That last question is always a tough one, since we ourselves are

never fully in tip-top shape, and often feel awkward asking about something so “personal and private.” But as we learned from St. Paul, our lives are not our own, and if anything, a relationship with someone suffering depression is an excellent opportunity to begin laying the foundations for a community built on Christ-centered brokenness, rather than on the brokenness of the world. If your friend is suffering from any of the above symptoms, try to think of creative alternatives, such as more edifying and thought provoking music, outdoor or communal activities, or even offer to become prayer partners and start up a regular prayer life together! Depression feeds on monotony and boredom, so if you can find creative ways to engage your friends submerged interests, you can kill birds with one stone...and bring the third one to life!

All this bespeaks the power of routine. Disciplined people who have a routine are rarely depressed; if anything, they often need to relax a bit more. But for people with depression, a routine can be a liberation, although easing in to it can be hell. Regular eating habits, regular exercise, regular prayer, regular bedtimes...all these can make a huge difference, and if you can show them the patience and commitment to walk with them through this initial suffering, you will do wonders for their spirits. Along with these routines, I often find that people who suffer from depression do very well in adapting some sort of liturgical prayer life. Manna’s morning prayer is a good place to explore the liturgy, and if you or your friend is feeling adventurous, I also recommend visiting the Episcopal Church at Princeton’s Sunday night service, or Princeton Evangelical Worship, to get a taste of what formal worship is like. High church liturgies which utilized a variety of symbols and forms help to externalize the depressed person’s faith and free it from the tangles of their confused thoughts. Far from being “dead ritual,” liturgy can often liberate the heart of the worshipper to experience God in ways that their minds will not allow in more evangelical settings. And of course, the same applies in reverse: if your friend is caught up in bad routines, such as attending a church where because of the liturgy they have ceased to be stirred by the Gospel, gently suggest trying something new. A visit to the Brooklyn Tabernacle is always a joy, and a genuine evangelical experience!

Depressed people often feel trapped within themselves, condemning themselves for being turned-inward and uncontrollably self-centered. You, and the Manna community, can help all of God’s children to become more outwardly focused by finding

opportunities to perform random acts of gratuitous kindness and service. These can range from a spontaneous appreciation card for a friend to seeking out volunteer opportunities at a local shelter. David always appreciates help setting up before Large Group meetings as well! And because depressed people often lack the discipline to finish simple tasks, asking them to help you do your dishes, do your laundry, or clean your room may actually help give them a task to focus their thoughts, as well as an unshakable sense of accomplishment at having done something concrete with their hands for someone that they love.

Gratitude is hard to come by when most of your life is lived in anticipation of pain. Anything you can do to encourage your friend to focus on God's grace, and on His miraculous gifts in the world around you, can help to stimulate their memories and their sense of awe, wonder and thanksgiving. Suggest that they go for a walk on the tree path on a beautiful afternoon. Every time they say something negative, ask them to name seven positive things about themselves or others. My girlfriend Leah does that one for me, and it always serves to keep the focus away from me and on the love of God. Another wonderful habit to encourage them to get into is the keeping of a gratitude journal, in which they daily list five to seven things for which they are thankful that day.

Finally, as a Princeton student, you can help to transform the way that the university views mental health on campus. By resisting a reductionist view that errs either on the materialistic or the spiritualist side of things, you can find ways to apply your Gospel worldview to the transforming of the very structures that help govern life and health at Princeton. Some Manna students in the past have been on the University Peer Health Educators and helped to put out the booklet *Uninvisible*, from which the Princetonian's testimony was taken. The Counseling and Psychological Services department of UHS is still undergoing major changes, and Dr. Kolligian has committed to seeking out more holistic, community-oriented responses to counter depression before it becomes a long-term problem. He is planning to host informal group discussions about types of depression, discerning boundaries between depression and the blues, examinations of college culture³⁰, and other events at which we need Christian minds

³⁰ Kleinman, Aaron. "University fills vacancy at helm of Mental Health Services." www.dailyprincetonian.com/archives/2004/09/28/news/10874.shtml.

present in order to help shape campus dialogue and engage it from the perspective of a Gospel worldview. Given the pressing reality of depression in our nation, we as Christians have a responsibility to understand as much as we can so that we can continue to deepen our understanding of the Gospel and can continue to preach its Good News effectively to those who are suffering. The area of Mental Health is one in which Christians at Princeton can make a very real and influential impact, both through direct interaction with UHS, and also through a prayerful and committed public ministry at the grassroots level. It is our major missions field at Princeton University, and the major struggle of our times. But as St. Paul says to the Romans, where sin abounds, grace abounds still all the more. (Rom. 5:20)

Conclusion

As Moses concludes his farewell speech in Deuteronomy, he takes a moment to offer a blessing to each of the tribes of Israel. Out of the twelve, the words he prays over the least of the tribes are perhaps the greatest promise of them all:

Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in Him,
For He shields Him all day long,
And the one the Lord loves rests between His shoulders.
(Deut. 33:12b)

Our God is a God of infinite love and grace. As His Body and Blood, His Eucharistic community on this campus, we are called not only to be His presence to others, but also His embrace and His Holy and loving kiss to all those are sick for His love. Because of the redeeming work of His Son, our brokenness ceases to be a weakness and becomes for us our greatest strength, offering prophetic insight into the movements of the spirit of this age, and making possible a greater unity in His grace. It is our community's great blessing and wonderful opportunity to be given the chance to share the good news of God's grace with all those with whom we come in contact. May we always remember, and seek to give to others, the assurance of Our Lord that He once gave to the prophet Jeremiah in the midst of Israel's greatest brokenness, that "I have loved you with an everlasting love." (Jer. 31:3) Even so, the peace of the Lord be with you, and His grace, and His love.

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