

Resilience: Spiritual Practices and Theological Insights in Different Religious Traditions

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SHORT PAPER ABSTRACTS

Samora Ayivor

The impact of faith healers' teaching about healing on the health-seeking behaviour of their congregants and its implications for society: the Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic situation.

The teachings of Pentecostal and Charismatic faith healers on health and healing have significantly influenced their adherents' perspectives on healing, affecting their way of life in society. This paper utilizes an a posteriori inductive reduction approach to analyse data collected from interviews with pastors and church members of some Pentecostal churches in Ghana between May and June 2024. The findings indicate that pastors' teachings shape congregants' health-seeking behaviours. Contrary to the belief that Pentecostal and Charismatic believers exclusively rely on faith healing and reject biomedical practices, this study reveals three distinct healing practices among Pentecostals and Charismatics in Ghana. The healing practices are biomedical healing, faith healing, and divine health. It is argued that these faith healers do not pose a barrier to biomedical healthcare delivery but provide substantial support. Lastly, faith healers' teachings about health and healing promote good societal interpersonal relationships.

Olena Chemodanova

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware on Sources of Orthodox Theology that Empower Relationships to God, People, and Nature

Metropolitan Kallistos of Dioklea (1934–2022) was the first Englishman who became Orthodox Bishop since the Great Schism. He was both academic theologian and spiritual father, who significantly contributed to enculturation of Orthodox Christianity in the United Kingdom. He built bridges in both directions by popularizing Orthodox spirituality in the West and advocating openness and ecumenical movement within Orthodoxy itself. Nevertheless, the foremost concern of his theological reflections were relations with God. Then, drawing on trends of modern Orthodox theology, he insisted that a true person is a relational being, who gains their spiritual maturity in relations with God, people and nature. He considered anthropology to be the most important theological question of the 21st century. He believed that propiarte answers to the question: "What is to be human?", could heal inter-Christian divisions, modern society conflicts and ecological crisis. Thus, in this paper I will analyse metropolitan Kallistos' theological reflections on resilience and sources of Orthodox theology he offered to be guiding principles for modern Christians.

Gabriela Ďurašková

"Possibilities of spiritual growing in the context of difficult life circumstances"

This paper will explore psycho-spiritual growth and the way it can occur in situations that are psychologically challenging for a person. It will draw on findings from the fields of psychotherapy and spiritual accompaniment, as well as probe into my own research interviews with people who

practice meditation. The paper will note in which areas of their lives meditation may have helped them during difficult times in their lives and how the process worked.

Lenka Filová

Beauty in the art of Paul Evdokimov

In my paper I will focus on the role of beauty in Paul Evdokimov's concept of art. The aim of the paper is to present his concept of art in relation to beauty. For Evdokimov, God is the source of all beauty and all art is its own language that seeks to express meaning. At its height, in the art of the icon, it is capable of expressing a secret message, the ultimate, supreme meaning. Evdokimov distinguishes between profane, religious and sacred art. In my paper I will show how Evdokimov defines this distinction and how the different types of art relate to beauty.

Ondřej Fischer

Communitarian Perception of the Concept of Human Dignity as a Source of Resilience

In my paper I address some of the ways resilience within society, of individuals and communities, can be strengthened through further elaboration and realization of the concept of human dignity. There are changes in the perception of human dignity, which is becoming less intelligible to the mainstream of the society. In public discussions the concept of human dignity is often considered as fitting only to the religious/conservatives. It loses its potential to affect pragmatic situations in which more attractive pragmatic criteria come to consideration. The attribution of human dignity to every individual has a protective effect of the value of each individual. It does not, however, directly contribute to strengthening people as relational beings in their resilience. The paper argues that following an alternative concept of human dignity, based upon deeper analysis of the complex role of the individual within a local community/neighbourhood, can have an impact on one's resilience.

Piotr Kopiec

Christian Anthropology as a Foundation of Economic Resilience: a Survey of Perspectives

Instability and uncertainty are some of the most accurate words describing today's world. Some pictures from different theoretical phrases can perfectly illustrate it: a world war in pieces, Casino-capitalism, technological revolution driven by Artificial Intelligence, to mention a few. Even when cursorily considered, their consequences bring some images of dystopia or post-apocalyptic fiction to mind. A large part of such uncertainty derives from the prevailing economic order and, in addition, from a global economic debate.

Discussions on resilience taking place on many institutional levels and from different intellectual perspectives can be regarded as a quest to mitigate this uncertainty. Many refer to the economy. Roughly speaking, economic resilience is defined as a system's ability to function during different crises. Yet it means that when building such resilience, one must ask about the very foundation of a system.

Answers to it are worked out, among others, within Christian churches and by Christian theologians. Most Christian theologians discern failures of the economy and disastrous results of economic instability. Usually, they insist that such a flawed economic system is based on an anthropological error. Even though sometimes differently explained, depending on confessional or political perspective, the existence of an anthropological error is a shared belief, thus becoming a point of ecumenical convergence.

The paper aims to present some examples of theological teaching on the economy that point out the anthropological error as the very beginning of today's economic instability and some theological proposals to counter this instability.

Bedřiška Kotmelová

Professional care as a relation in the context of the theology of Vladimir Lossky and Dorothee Sölle

In this paper I will describe the main ethics and inner attributes of professional care. Then I will look at them from a theological perspective involving the presence of God. To do this I draw on Vladimir Lossky and Dorothee Sölle. The main attributes of their theologies of Divine Presence are lived experience, freedom, truthfulness, balancing what I know and what I cannot recognize. Based on their theology we can build an inner landscape, where we can move when we care for people as a profession. Sometimes this inner landscape can help us not to get lost in difficult situations related to caregiving, sometimes questions arise that make us uneasy. The search for answers is not easy and sometimes indeed there is no answer.

Marieke Maes

Emmanuel Mounier and the Practice of Resilience

Emmanuel Mounier is known as one of the initiators of Personalism, a philosophical, political and spiritual movement that originated especially in France in the 1930s. In his studies he wanted to develop an alternative philosophical theory against the leading ideologies of that time. But his purpose surpassed the boundaries of academic philosophy. His aim was also the development of a spirituality and political actions to represent a powerful voice against the different threats of that time.

Mounier was the founding father of the still important journal *Esprit*. The inspiration and influence of Personalism transcends the historical circumstances in which it was rooted. In my presentation I will give a summary of the philosophy of Mounier; I will especially go into the meaning of the concept “person” and the consequences of being a person for political theory, society and ethics. In the conclusion I will describe the topical value of Personalism for spirituality and political action today as a good practice of openness to different religious and ideological cultures on the one hand and on the other hand resistance to adversity and hostility.

Veronika Matějková

Spiritual accompaniment as a tool for promoting resilience in people in difficult life situations.

A qualitative probe mapping through semi-structured interviews the experience of people seeking spiritual accompaniment at the Centre for the Care of the Soul at Charles University.

Andrei Meleshko

“Remembrance of future: the role of memory in creating resilience”

Memory is one of the most incredible and important aspects of human existence. It shapes identity, as memory and its interpretation form personality. At the same time, memory can act as a traumatic agent, bringing a person back to painful experiences or feelings of grief. The memories of a traumatic past can ruin the lives of those who still remember them and may even create difficulties for future generations by shaping patterns and archetypes of life. Traumatic memories remain a pressing issue in times when wars and various forms of violence devastate people's lives.

What can Christianity offer regarding memory, both now and in the future? In this paper, through a discussion of Miroslav Volf's *The End of Memory*, the concept of postmemory, and the Christian

rite of Communion, I seek to explore what Christianity proposes for the transition of memory from the past to the future and what kind of memory one may anticipate in eternity.

Jozef Murin

Cultivating Resilience Through Ascetic Discipline: Contemporary Approaches

Ascetic practices—fasting, discipline of prayer, solitude—have long been central to Christian spirituality, not as acts of self-denial for their own sake, but as pathways to resilience, inner freedom, and deeper communion. In the contemporary setting, where resilience is often framed in psychological or therapeutic terms, could these ancient monastic disciplines offer new relevance?

In this paper I will explore how asceticism, reinterpreted beyond its monastic roots, might foster resilience in contemporary society. Fasting, for example, need not be a religious obligation but a mindful engagement with consumption, cultivating attentiveness and self-knowledge. Discipline of prayer (daily office), rather than rigid observance, can provide rhythmic pauses in a fragmented, hyperconnected world. Solitude, historically embraced by desert fathers and mothers, speaks to a deep need for silence and interiority amid modern distractions.

Can we reclaim these practices—not as relics of an outdated piety, but as tools for human flourishing? Can we rediscover a spirituality of resilience: one that sustains not only individuals but communities seeking depth, meaning, and wholeness in an age of uncertainty?

Simone Muscionico

Resilience in the Desert

This contribution aims to present a reflection on how resilience can serve as a key interpretative lens for the experiences of the so-called ‘women of the desert’, a group of saints who lived in the early centuries of Christianity. These saints—particularly Mary of Egypt, Pelagia, Thaïs and Mary of Edessa—led lives of holiness in the desert, as penitents striving to restore a life of communion with God, in stark contrast to their former way of life. Their experiences, as recounted in the hagiographical *Vitae* that tell their life stories, are shaped both by the harsh natural and social environment and by their complex personal histories; to support them in their journey, these saintly women relied on two main resources: their newly found faith in God and the guidance of their ‘spiritual mentors’. This contribution seeks to demonstrate how these *Vitae* highlight the necessity of resilience, understood primarily as the ability of these saint women to recover from experiences profoundly at odds with the Christian life and the human well-being.

Josef Prokeš

Meditation as a help for today's high school youth

In my paper, I would like to introduce an activity that we have started to do at the secondary state school - gymnasium in Vodňany. It is a course where students are introduced to the basics of meditation, perception of their body and breath, mindfulness and other means for their self-development. All this is with a focus on spirituality and students' searching (their self-acceptance and deciding the direction of their future life).

It is an activity designed to respond to the problems in the psyche and spiritual experience of today's students, ones that are becoming more frequent, especially in the post-Covid time.

In my paper I will present the curriculum of this course, the presuppositions on which I base it and also the first experiences. I will also draw on the experience I am gaining in leading a pilgrimage site and spiritual centre that deals with similar challenges.

Filip Sedlák

Being to Life - Martyr Spirituality as a Response for the Answer of Humanity Threatened by the Terror of Death

Martin Heidegger describes humans as "being to death". This perhaps works even more when death becomes really consciously close in times of war, crisis, and oppression, when it ceases to be hypothetical, invisible, and distant, but when it is really painfully and terrifyingly present in our everyday life. Does the proximity of death bring us closer to the true essence of humanity, or, on the contrary, does its pressure crush us, deform us and make us monsters instead the image of God? The question of resilience in the face of death has one surprising, old and still-living Christian answer: martyrdom. Especially martyr spirituality can be seen paradoxically like Tillich's "courage to be". A martyrdom seems to hack the whole problem and escape from its jaws when it accepts the formative pressure of death and transforms it into the open arms of God, which not only need not be feared but which we can look forward to and even enthusiastically run to meet. This paper will discuss the pros and cons of martyr spirituality and the possibilities and limits of its contemporary application to the question of resilience in the context of staying or becoming truly human.

Zdenko Širka

Developing religious nationalism as an attempt of resilience in Serbia and former Yugoslavia

This paper will deal with the current societal and religious situation in Serbia (and former Yugoslavia). The main idea is that the utilised rhetorics in Serbia shows significant marks of synthesis of religious and national elements, which have been often labelled as ethnotheology or religious nationalism. The topic will be divided in three parts. (i) explain the roots of this mindset; (ii) bring to fore several representatives and explain context of their thoughts; (iii) present pros and contras of this mentality. The paper will show that the Serbian religious nationalism in its core is not exclusive, aggressive and nationalistic, but apologetic and defensive, developed as a form of resilience. Negative (religious) practices will not be denied nor scaled down, so we will search for the pattern how resilience transforms into abuse.

Barbora Šmejdová

"The Strength of Little Ones: The Theme of Resilience Through the Lens of MacDonald's and Lewis's Children Characters"

The paper will explore the theme of resilience in the works of George MacDonald and C.S. Lewis, focusing on chosen children characters whose perceived fragility becomes a source of profound strength. Through an examination of key narratives and theological insights of both authors, the study illustrates how these young protagonists embody resilience by facing trials with faith, imagination, and courage. This analysis aligns with the conference's exploration of resilience as a transformative force in personal and communal life, offering a literary and theological perspective on the interplay between vulnerability and strength.