

## **More than a Metaphor: σπλαγχνίζομαι and the Physiology of Empathy**

Abstract: Following the notation “fig.” in the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon, the first instinct of commentators, teachers and pastors is to understand σπλαγχνίζομαι (Matt 9:36 and elsewhere) to be a metaphor for “compassion.” Recent studies in neurobiology, however, that have shed new light on the physiological processes underlying emotion strongly suggest that empathy is the result of a complex experience both of cognitive observation (“Jesus saw the crowds”) and somatic mirroring (“Jesus felt their pain”). Because inattention to the physical aspects of empathic caregiving by pastors and others in ministry can result in compassion fatigue and stress-related physical ailments, suggestions to help alleviate the impact of compassion will also be offered (Mark 6:31).

Rev. Christopher T. Cahill, D.Min., has been Pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Lodi, Ohio, since 1989. He is also the Second Vice-President of the SELC District, and that District’s Ministerial Health Coordinator. A member of the International Association of Trauma Professionals, he has the Certificate from that Association as a Compassion Fatigue Professional. More at <http://chris-cahill.strikingly.com/>

Please consider the following scenarios:

- The strong, macho-type man who can't stand the sight of blood;
- The young and eager paramedic who successfully treats her first severely injured accident victim, then turns aside to throw up in a ditch;
- The loving young father who is committed to remaining at his wife's side during childbirth, only to find himself passing out on the floor at her first scream of agony;
- Me, even after 35 years of hospital visits and prayers in Intensive Care Units, excusing myself when the nurse walks in to start a new IV in my parishioner's arm;
- And two thousand years ago a young rabbi who gets off a fishing boat with His disciples, sees the crowds awaiting Him with all the joys and sorrows, miseries and sicknesses and issues of humanity, and ἐσπλαγχνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν.

Long after pastors graduate from seminaries and have forgotten many of the details of their Greek and Hebrew classes, there are a few miscellaneous details that stick with them if for no other reason than that they are just so *odd*. Most of us couldn't really recall the complete conjugation of αγαπῶ, for instance, but a word like Σπλαγχνίζομαι sticks with us. Maybe it's because it's so unusual. Maybe it's because you can't pronounce it without clearing your throat at the same time. Maybe it's because we secretly suspect that we've never really given this word its due respect, either in Greek class, in translations or commentaries or study Bibles, or even in our own teaching. Today I'd like to offer a new look at this perennial favorite.

I offer first a preliminary definition of Σπλαγχνίζομαι as the Greek word that refers to the physical and emotional reaction that one normal human being has when they witness another human being's pain or suffering. The root of the word has to do with the bowels or the guts<sup>1</sup>, and so perhaps the most accurate translation (which I've never read anywhere) would be "When Jesus saw the crowds He became queasy." Now perhaps for some people it's difficult to imagine Jesus becoming a little nauseated at His first sight of a crowd of lepers, and so when we come across this word in the New Testament it almost always ends up translated as "compassion" or "pity" and the translators' notes, if there are any, almost always strongly suggest that this word is to be taken figuratively.<sup>2</sup>

I feel constrained to note here that as Lutherans we believe, teach, and confess that Jesus is not only full divine but also fully human. This means that any teaching that detracts from or diminishes either His divinity or His humanity is a perilous undertaking, as the consequences spell disaster for the Scriptural confession of redemption and justification.<sup>3</sup> I won't insist that today's exploration is better; but I will caution against insisting that Jesus *would never* have become even a little green around the gills in all His healing ministry, because I think that such insistence would diminish His humanity; but that is an issue for the Systematics Department.

There are only a couple of key texts in the New Testament in which Σπλαγχνίζομαι occurs, and for our purposes today the exegetical conversation will focus on Matthew 9:36. Here the word is used to describe Jesus' response when He witnesses the deplorable condition of the crowds before Him. Matthew does indeed use

the simile “like sheep without a shepherd.” The Greek reads in part “Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἐσπλαγγνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν.” Now, how to translate these words?

A quick and entertaining stroll through the website BibleGateway indicates that three translations read “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them.”<sup>4</sup> Two translations have “When he saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them.”<sup>5</sup> The Good News Translation reads “As he saw the crowds, his heart was filled with pity for them”; but that wasn’t enough for J.B. Phillips, who tells us that “he was deeply moved with pity for them.” The King James Version uses the word “compassion”; the Living Bible uses “pity.” The Message says “When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke.” Finally, the Wycliffe Bible delightfully says “Forsooth Jesus, seeing companies, had ruth on them; for they were travailed, and lying as sheep not having a shepherd.”<sup>6</sup>

The word Σπλαγγνίζομαι also turns up in Luke 7:13 at the funeral in Nain, and again in Luke 15:20 at the return of the Prodigal Son, with similar resulting translations.

What are we to make of this word that the Greeks derived from the bowels<sup>7</sup> and we, somehow, have understood to refer only to emotions? The commentaries cited on the websites BibleHub<sup>8</sup> and Blue Letter Bible<sup>9</sup>, when they mention this word at all, seem to follow suit in understanding it metaphorically (although to be fair, most are in a hurry to deal with what Jesus proposes to do in order to minister to the sheep without the shepherd, including Jeffrey Gibbs in his 2006 Concordia Commentary on Matthew)<sup>10</sup>. An exception is John MacArthur, who begins with suggesting that this is a figurative usage but then takes some time to suggest that all of us who are human have had physical reactions to emotional encounters.<sup>11</sup>

Concordia Publishing House's Lutheran Study Bible of 2009 includes the following study notes:

- At Matthew 9:36: Lit, “moved with pity”; based on a term referring to the belly, regarded as the seat of the emotions.
- At Luke 7:13: Lit, “his gut moved.” Jesus experienced the same gut reaction as we sometimes do in sad situations.
- At Luke 15:20: Compassion. In the NT, this word is largely used only of God, of Jesus, and in parables of characters representing God. E.g., it describes the Good Samaritan, which likely represents Jesus (see note, 10:37). The word, therefore, represents gracious love beyond the human norm, understanding and reaching into the life of another.<sup>12</sup>

We see that, taken together, the editors of the Lutheran Study Bible still understand the phrase ἐσπλαγγνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν in a largely metaphorical sense, using either the traditional term “regarded as the seat of the emotions” or a now more spiritualized understanding, “represents gracious love beyond the human norm.” But today I want to suggest that we consider a much more physiological understanding of the phrase and even the note on Luke 7 (“Jesus experienced the same gut reaction as we sometimes do in sad situations”).

Let's turn first to recent studies in the field of traumatology. Leading researchers are finding out from their work particularly among military veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that there is a deep connection between physical and psychological suffering.<sup>13</sup> Researchers like Bessel van der Kolk, Peter Levine, and

Babette Rothschild<sup>14</sup> are discovering that those who suffer psychological trauma often exhibit accompanying physiological symptoms. It's not enough that a fellow is plagued by haunting, repetitive nightmares; his heart races, he has night sweats, he develops intestinal issues and a host of other maladies that seem to have no organic derivation except from his emotional suffering.<sup>15</sup>

In a perfectly rational world it might be possible to observe and treat such sufferers with complete objectivity; that is, with no adverse effects upon the doctor, nurse, chaplain, pastor, or whoever might be tending to the needs of such an individual. But researchers are also discovering that these caregivers are themselves at risk for a combination of psychological and physical ailments called "secondary traumatic stress" or "compassion fatigue."<sup>16</sup> What this means is this: merely hanging around suffering people and tending to their needs with a certain amount of empathy leaves us open to "feeling their pain" in some very literal, physiological sense: our own health issues as pastors, be they heart disease, intestinal disorders, blood pressure issues, even some cancers, whatever the causes, are made more complex because this is the long-term cost of dealing with the suffering people around us with empathy.

But how do we develop empathy to begin with? In the normal course of human growth and development, the eyesight of newborns seems to have a depth-of-field of somewhere between eight and eighteen inches. This means that anything within this range is in focus, while anything beyond that range is out of focus. This is also approximately the distance from the mother's breast to her face. The result of this is that as the infant Jesus was nursing, for example, He was only able to focus on the face of His mother Mary. Although unable to verbalize what he's seeing while he's nursing, a

structure in any infant's brain called the amygdala gathers these images and stores them like a collection of emojis until another structure of the brain, the hippocampus, has developed enough to begin to sort them out and give them labels.<sup>17</sup> When children "soak up" these physical and emotional cues from their parents and others, that process is called "attunement" and is an important component in the way we learn empathy.<sup>18</sup> As the child grows he also begins to develop the ability to imitate the bodily actions of others with his own body – he smiles in response to their smiles.<sup>19</sup> In babies we call this "monkey see, monkey do," but the scientific term is somatic mirroring, and researchers are noting that empathy in adults is a result of a complex process that involves a combination of somatic mirroring and cognitive observation.<sup>20</sup> It works like this: consider a person with a so-called "infectious laugh." When they begin to laugh, people around them also begin to laugh. Sometimes those folks look at each other and say (while still laughing) "What's so funny?" The answer is that they've "caught" the infectious laughter from the first person, without conscious mimicry, without understanding even. Their bodies simply react to what the first person's body is experiencing. Unlike infants, however, adults are able to discuss and analyze the event.

In a similar, yet darker, way, caregivers like doctors, nurses, first responders, chaplains, pastors, and even Jesus Himself can "catch" the painful physiological cues given off by the persons they are caring for.<sup>21</sup> In another context I have said that as we offer pastoral care to someone walking through the valley of the shadow of death, that shadow falls across our own souls, also.<sup>22</sup> This happens to us while we are unaware of it, without us even completely understanding the process. Our bodies simply react to

what the first person's body is experiencing. If your body is suddenly confronted by an unexpected, even horrible trauma inflicted upon another person, you may have a sudden and violent physiological reaction – you may faint, throw up, or soil yourself. If somehow you've grown more accustomed to the pain or suffering of others, you may not have such a sudden physiological reaction; but over time there is a cost that mounts up. And what of an experienced first responder who comes suddenly upon a mass casualty event? Even such an individual may have to stop and take time not only to collect his or her thoughts before wading in to work but also to allow his stomach to stop churning or her heartbeat to calm down. When Jesus first saw the masses “like sheep without a shepherd,” was His reaction merely a figure of speech for His compassion for them or was it that He, as fully human as the Chalcedonian definition confesses Him to be,<sup>23</sup> needed to take a moment to allow his stomach to settle down, his heart rate to slow, his breathing to normalize, before he waded in to the hard work of empathic healing?

I would like to think that the word Σπλαγχνίζομαι opens the door to that possibility. We human beings want and need our healers and caregivers to be human, to understand, to “get” us. We have little use for robotic, detached, *ruth*-less caregivers, no matter how gifted they may seem to be.<sup>24</sup> Even if there is a particular reason that the Holy Spirit limited the writers of the New Testament in their use of Σπλαγχνίζομαι to Jesus or, in parables, to the Father, I would hope that His intention was not to imply that this was a phenomenon unique to Jesus among human beings. I would rather hope that the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us by this usage that in the incarnation of the Son

our Triune God was fully and completely immersed in every aspect and detail of the total human experience.<sup>25</sup>

Just one last note here: researchers are also discovering the degrees to which compassionate caregiving takes its toll over time.<sup>26</sup> If the empathic pastor isn't careful, the pains and suffering of others will adversely affect him physiologically as well as psychologically. Fritz's classic work on Pastoral Theology contains a chapter on self-care titled "The Pastor's Own Self" with the sections "1. The pastor's Personal Christianity (spiritual fitness) . . . 2. The Pastor's Ability (intellectual fitness) . . . 3. The Pastor's Health (physical fitness)."<sup>27</sup> Not surprisingly, given its writing in 1945, there's no mention of the Pastor's emotional health. Thomas Oden's more recent work of the same title, however, contains no reference to pastoral self-care at all.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, current research is advising caregivers (pastors) that the best kinds of preventive practice are a healthy lifestyle, body awareness, and rest.<sup>29</sup> Eat and drink what you are supposed to, the way your doctor advises. Be aware of those people and times when your breathing accelerates, you hear your heartbeat in your ears, your stomach twists in knots, and learn how to keep those physical reactions under control. Get plenty of sleep and plenty of rest. In this last respect we have it hands down over the secular practitioners who have never heard of Sabbath.<sup>30</sup> If we pastors would use the Sabbath appropriately (and that's another issue, because most of us don't) we would find it the resource of healing and restoration that it was meant to be from Day Seven of Creation. In this context we can remember that Jesus not only "had ruth on [the companies]; for they were travailed, and lying as sheep not having a shepherd", but He also said to His disciples including us, "Let's go to a place where we can be alone to rest for a while.'

Many people were coming and going, and Jesus and the apostles didn't even have a chance to eat." (Mark 6:31, God's Word translation)<sup>31</sup> To put it a different way: have you ever wondered whether goodness and mercy might be following you all the days of your life because you simply never slow down enough to give them a chance to catch up?

Let me conclude today by proposing a new, threefold exegetical-pastoral definition of *σπλαγχνίζομαι*: 1. *σπλαγχνίζομαι* is the immediate physiological response of a normally empathetic and compassionate human being to the suffering of another human being; queasiness. 2. *σπλαγχνίζομαι* is the response of the incarnate Son of God by His entire human nature – physiological, emotional, intellectual, empathic, spiritual – to the totality of the human condition and experience. 3. By extension, *σπλαγχνίζομαι* is the effect of the sufferings of others upon Christian caregivers, to the degree that the compassion and empathy of these caregivers mirror that of Jesus Himself.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “*σπλαγχνίζομαι* 1 have pity, feel sympathy, with or for someone. *splagnchnon* as inward parts, entrails; b. fig. of the seat of the emotions, in our usage heart, c, of the feeling itself. . . . *Splanchna*, 1. a. lit. inward parts, entrails. . . . b. fig., of the seat of the emotions, in our usage heart. . . . in our lit. mostly as the seat and source of love . . . sympathy, and mercy . . . c. of the feeling itself love, affection . . . . 2. Sing. . . . mercy, love.” - Arndt, William F. and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A translation and adaptation of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wuerterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der uebrigen urchestlichen Literatur*. 4th Revised and Augmented Edition, 1952. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957. P. 770.

<sup>2</sup> “Lit, “moved with pity”; based on a term referring to the belly, regarded as the seat of the emotions.” – *Lutheran Study Bible*, Rev. Edward A. Englebrect, General Editor. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009, p. 1599.

<sup>3</sup> “For if Christ had been conceived without sin by the Holy Spirit and had been born and had fulfilled all righteousness in his human nature alone but had not been true, eternal God, this obedience and suffering

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of the human nature would not be reckoned to us as righteousness. In the same way, if the Son of God had not become a human being, the divine nature in itself could not have been our righteousness. Accordingly, we believe, teach, and confess that the entire obedience of the entire person of Christ, which he rendered to the Father on our behalf unto the most shameful death of the cross [Phil. 2:8], is reckoned to us as righteousness.” – *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration III. Righteousness. The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000, p 572

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. ESV® Permanent Text Edition® (2016). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.  
*Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®  
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*The Message (MSG)* Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson  
*Wycliffe Bible (WYC)* 2001 by Terence P. Noble

<sup>7</sup> “In the East the Greeks and the Hebrews thought the seat of the emotions was the abdomen. Their perceptions are easy to understand. Whenever a close friend or family member is hurt or even when one thinks about such a potential accident, there is an almost sickening contraction in the abdomen. For the Greeks, the abdomen was the seat of the violent passions of anger and lust. The Hebrews, however, understood it to be the center of tender affections, such as kindness and compassion.” - Kenneth E. Bailey. *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2005. 2nd edition, p. 68

<sup>8</sup> <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/9-36.htm>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv/mat/9/36/t\\_comms\\_938036](https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv/mat/9/36/t_comms_938036)

<sup>10</sup> “The verb *σπλαγχνίζομαι* occurs in the NT only in the Synoptic Gospels. It almost always has Jesus or God the Father as its explicit subject. In Matthew, Jesus is its subject in 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; and 20:34, while the Father is its subject (in a parabolic context) in 18:27.” - Jeffrey A. Gibbs. *Concordia Commentary: Matthew 1:1-11:1*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006 via Logos Bible Software edition. Note by CTC: Gibbs says nothing more about *σπλαγχνίζομαι* here, other than a brief suggestion that it is the motivation for mission, which he is much more eager to discuss.

<sup>11</sup> “In Scripture it is sometimes used literally, as when describing Judas’s death (Acts 1:18). More often, however it is used figuratively to represent the emotions, much in the way we use the term HEART today. The Hebrews, like many other ancient peoples, expressed attitudes and emotions in terms of physiological symptoms, not in abstractions. As most of us know from personal experience, many intense emotions - anxiety, fear, pity, remorse, and so on- can directly, and often immediately, affect the stomach and the digestive tract. Upset stomach, colitis, and ulcers are a few of the common ailments frequently related to emotional trauma. It is not strange, then, that ancient people associated strong emotions with that region of the body. The heart, on the other hand, was associated more with the mind and thinking (see Prov. 16:23, Matt. 15:19; Rom. 10:10, Heb. 4:12). The heart was the source of thought and action, whereas the bowels were the responder, the reactor. Jesus, therefore used the common term of His day to express His deep compassion for the great crowds of people who were suffering. But His care was not

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merely figurative, because He felt in His own body the symptoms of His deep caring. If our bodies literally ache in pain and nausea when we experience great agony, remorse, or sympathy, we can be sure that the Son of Man felt them even more.” - John MacArthur Jr. *Matthew 8-15 MacArthur New Testament Commentary* Chicago: Moody Press, 1987 p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> *Lutheran Study Bible*, Rev. Edward A. Englebrect, General Editor. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Shay. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Scribner, 1994.

Jonathan Shay. *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. New York: Scribner, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Bessel van der Kolk. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking / Penguin, 2014

Babette Rothschild. *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.

Peter A. Levine. *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma: The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences*. Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 1997

<sup>15</sup> “Exposed to the continuous threats of warfare, the body remains mobilized for battle indefinitely. There is no longer any baseline state of physical calm or comfort. Over time the combat veteran’s body may seem to have turned against him. He begins to suffer not only from insomnia and agitation but also of numerous types of somatic symptoms. Tension headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, skin disorders, and abdominal, back, or neck pain are extremely common. He may complain of tremors, choking sensations, or a rapid heartbeat. Some veterans become so accustomed to their condition that they cease to recognize the connection between their bodily distress symptoms and the climate of terror in which these symptoms were formed.” - Jonathan Shay. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Scribner, 1994. p. 174

<sup>16</sup> “While compassion fatigue refers to the profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate, the term vicarious trauma describes the transformation of our view of the world due to the cumulative exposure to traumatic images and stories. This is accompanied by intrusive thoughts and imagery and difficulty ridding ourselves of the traumatic experiences recounted by our clients. Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is the result of bearing witness to a traumatic event (or to a series of events), which can lead to PTSD-like symptoms (hearing a graphic account of abuse, debriefing first responders, etc.). I would argue that VT is the result of many STS events. Burnout has to do with the stress and frustration caused by the workplace.” - Francoise Mathieu. *The Compassion Fatigue Workbook* New York: Routledge, 2012, page 14.

“Many of my patients experience shame and remorse for how the lives of their wives, parents, and children have been deformed by the impact of their own psychological and moral injuries. This phenomenon of "secondary traumatization" in close relationships has been extensively studied and documented - and the veterans themselves are vividly aware of it.” - Jonathan Shay. *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. New York: Scribner, 2002. p. 83

<sup>17</sup> “Emotion is deeply intertwined with every piece of information the baby gathers. A baby learns and adapts the cultural attitudes and values of his family by osmosis, not in words but in the scent of daily interaction. He may be nonverbal, but he can read emotions perfectly.” - Mary Gordon. *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child*. New York: The Experiment, 2005. p. 69

<sup>18</sup> “At the heart of this attuning is the sharing of nonverbal signals, including tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and timing and intensity of responses. Being mindful of these signals in our children is paralleled by our own awareness of the sensations of our own bodies. Bodily sensations form an important foundation for knowing how we feel and what has meaning in our lives. Emotional

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communication enables us to viscerally feel the joy of our children and to share and amplify such positive states with them.” - Daniel J. Siegel and Mary Hartzell. *Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/ Penguin, 2003. p. 249

<sup>19</sup> “Attuned connections create resonance. Another factor central to creating resonance may be “mirror neurons.” The mirror neuron system is the new finding that in humans a particular kind of neuron directly links perception to action. This system of mirror neurons may be the early basis for how one mind creates the mental state of another inside itself.” - Daniel J. Siegel and Mary Hartzell. *Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/ Penguin, 2003. p. 65

<sup>20</sup> “A surprisingly large quantity of hard scientific evidence indicates that empathy is more than a cognitive process. Empathy is, in fact, a highly integrated process involving both cognitive and somatic, brain, and body.” - Babette Rothschild. *Help for the Helper: The Psychophysiology of Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. page 47.

“The ability to attribute mental states to others as a way of understanding their social behavior is learned from infancy and enhanced by positive experiences in the environment in which we grow up. This ability is key in successfully discerning what another person intends by what he says or does.” - Mary Gordon. *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child*. New York: The Experiment, 2005. p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> “Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human. When we look at compassion this way, it becomes clear that something more is involved than a general kindness or tenderheartedness.” - Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. New York: Doubleday / Image Books, 1983. p. 4.

“Responding to the feelings, needs, and desires of others is at the heart of loving, healthy relationships. In an ideal world, all children would be raised in such a circle of love and nurturance.” p. 108 - Mary Gordon. *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child*. New York: The Experiment, 2005.

“We are most vulnerable to compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization when we are unaware of the state of our own body and mind. We can become so focused on the distress of those in our care that we neglect our own growing discomfort.” - Babette Rothschild. *Help for the Helper: The Psychophysiology of Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. page 103

<sup>22</sup> “Traumatic experiences do leave traces, whether on a large scale (on our histories and cultures) or close to home, on our families, with dark secrets being imperceptibly passed down through generations. They also leave traces on our minds and emotions, on our capacity for joy and intimacy, and even on our biology and immune systems. Trauma affects not only those who are directly exposed to it but also those around them.” - Bessel van der Kolk. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking / Penguin, 2014. p. 1

<sup>23</sup> “Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us One and the same Son, the Self-same Perfect in Godhead, the Self-same Perfect in Manhood; truly God and truly Man; the Self-same of a rational soul and body; co-essential with the Father according to the Godhead, the Self-same co-essential with us according to the Manhood; like us in all things, sin apart; before the ages begotten of the Father as to the Godhead, but in the last days, the Self-same, for us and for our salvation (born) of Mary the Virgin Theotokos as to the Manhood; One and the Same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten; acknowledged in Two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the Natures being in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the properties of each Nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and One Hypostasis; not as though He were parted or divided into Two Persons, but One and the Self-same Son and Only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; even as from the beginning the prophets have taught concerning Him, and as

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the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath taught us, and as the Symbol of the Fathers hath handed down to us.”  
- [https://archive.org/stream/MN41552ucmf\\_1/MN41552ucmf\\_1\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/MN41552ucmf_1/MN41552ucmf_1_djvu.txt)

<sup>24</sup> “To be trustworthy, a listener must be ready to experience some of the terror, grief, and rage that the victim did. This is one meaning, after all, of the word compassion.” - Jonathan Shay. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Scribner, 1994. p. 189.

“Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives. Numerous studies of disaster response around the globe have shown that social support is the most powerful protection against becoming overwhelmed by stress and trauma. Social support is not the same as merely being in the presence of others. The critical issue is RECIPROCITY: being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else's mind and heart.” - Bessel van der Kolk. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking / Penguin, 2014 p.79

<sup>25</sup> “Those who offer us comfort and consolation by being and staying with us in moments of illness, mental anguish, or spiritual darkness often grow as close to us as those with whom we have biological ties. They show their solidarity with us by willingly entering the dark, uncharted spaces of our lives. For this reason, they are the ones who bring new hope and help us discover new directions.” - Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. New York: Doubleday / Image Books, 1983. p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> “Vicarious traumatization is the transformation of the therapist's or helper's inner experience as a result of empathic engagement with survivor clients and their trauma material. Simply put, when we open our hearts to hear someone's story of devastation or betrayal, our cherished beliefs are challenged and we are changed. We view vicarious traumatization as an occupational hazard, an inescapable effect of trauma work. It is not something clients do to us; it is a human consequence of knowing, caring, and facing the reality of trauma.” - Karen W. Saakvitne & Laurie Anne Pearlman. *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996. p. 25

<sup>27</sup> John H.C. Fritz. *Pastoral Theology*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945. P. 17-27

<sup>28</sup> Thomas C. Oden. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. New York: Harper Collins / HarperOne, 1983

<sup>29</sup> As at the Concordia Plans Services “Be Well / Serve Well” website  
<http://www.concordiaplans.org/health/be-well-serve-well.html>

<sup>30</sup> “The interchange of physical activity and rest has been studied extensively by Juan-Carlos Lerman, whose research at the University of Arizona shows the biological need for rest every seventh day and the energizing value of rest. According to Lerman's theory, failing to rest after six days of steady work will lead to insomnia or sleepiness, hormonal imbalances, fatigue, irritability, organ stress, and other increasingly serious physical and mental symptoms. Lerman suggests that this need for rest every seventh day is rooted in the fact that the human biological clock operates on a 25-hour cycle. Because organized society prevents us from getting up one hour later each day to follow our natural internal clock, our body demands the time to “sleep in” or rest every so often to recover from the forced 24-hour time cycle that is too short. Lerman insists that we must “cease labor” once every seven days and rest our bodies for longer periods than on other days in order to catch up our cycle of time. He also adds that the biblical Sabbath commandment includes the ideas of both cessation of labor and refreshment.” - Marva J. Dawn. *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989. p. 69

<sup>31</sup> “In the breaking of the bread together, we reclaim our own broken condition rather than denying its reality. We become more aware than ever that we are taken, set apart as witnesses for God; that we are blessed by words and acts of grace; and that we are broken, not in revenge or cruelty, but in order to become bread which can be given as food to others.” - Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, and

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Douglas A. Morrison. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. New York: Doubleday / Image Books, 1983. p. 112.

<sup>32</sup> Suggestions for further consideration (offered by select reviewers of this manuscript before its presentation at the Exegetical Symposium):

1. What other Greek words are translated as “compassion” or “pity” in English New Testaments? How, if at all, are they related to Σπλαγχνίζομαι?
2. What Hebrew words are the equivalent of Σπλαγχνίζομαι in the Old Testament? How are they used, and what are the connotations and implications of their use? Are they similar to the implications of Σπλαγχνίζομαι discussed here?
3. How does the current conversation relate to our understanding of God having compassion on Adam and Eve after the fall into sin; God having compassion on His people repeatedly in the Book of Judges; or the emotional language of many of the Psalms?
4. How does the current conversation relate to the idea of “grieving the Holy Spirit”?
5. How did the prophets, apostles, and evangelists pray for or request prayers for battles with the spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects of their strength or weakness, if at all? Or did they simply ask for prayers from the people of God around them?
6. What insights might the Psalms offer in terms of our understanding about the interconnection between our spiritual, emotional, and physical conditions?