



THE JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL SOUL CARE

*Advancing Scholarship for the Biblical Care of Souls
within Higher Education.*

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This journal is dedicated to the generation of men and women whose commitment to the Word of God and care of souls has laid the groundwork for a resurgence of biblical soul care. *The Journal of Biblical Soul Care* is a reflection of your dedication to the sufficient Word of God and its ability to speak into the complexities of human nature and experience. The editorial team desires to promote Christian scholarship in the wake of your effective reorganization and apologetic of biblical soul care.

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Editorial: Learning in the Quietness

Greg E. Gifford¹

Within the past few weeks of this publication, we've lost the grandfather of biblical counseling—Jay Adams. What a privilege for us to have learned from him for all these years and to have him trailblaze the path that most of us walk. My church practices biblical counseling because of Jay Adams. Furthermore, family gets practical help from the Bible because of Jay Adams. O that God would provide us with a new generation of Adams' who let the Word of God determine their actions, who act so steadfastly, and impact so many for the Gospel of Jesus Christ! May we honor the legacy of Jay as we continue to practice the faithful care of souls.

This journal is a means to that end.

Recently, while teaching Theological Basis of Biblical Counseling at TMU, I was reminded of the importance of this journal. As much as I would like to have it been my own work that was cited, students were quoting from the first issue of the *JBSC*. Ed Wilde wrote some of the finest, if not the finest, materials biblical counselors have produced in regard to Common Grace. Three years later, students are reading Ed's articles to learn about biblical counseling and common grace.

After moderating at ETS this year, it became even more apparent that we, biblical counselors and carers of souls, need a place for us to learn, to read, to be questioned, and to talk with others in upstream environments. Historical Theologians, Systematic Theologians, Apologists, and Christian Philosophers have this but biblical carers of the soul do not have this ... yet. The needs of the hour are articles, like these, to shape the counseling room years from now. What we say in upstream, esoteric conversations will shape what is taught in our churches. The *JBSC* is that conversation.

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In this issue, you will find Joshua Clutterham argue for a conciliation praxis in the book of Philippians. Rhenn Cherry provides a biblical evaluation for the popular Enneagram. And Nate Brooks will assess CBT, arguably the most popular form of modern therapy. Finally, I will introduce you to a resource that should pique your interest and perhaps, join your library: *The Care of Souls*.

May these resources help you to learn in the quietness of this holiday season.

ARTICLES

To the Philippians: A Pauline Exemplar for Conciliation Praxis

Joshua Clutterham¹

Introduction: Philippians is a Letter from a Christian Conciliator

Paul's letter to the Philippians has long been treasured as a devotional gem in the Scripture. Its mood of a joy greater than circumstantial happiness (1:18; 2:18; 3:1; 4:4), and themes of unity, evangelistic efforts, and protection from God in the presence of adversity have provided comfort and encouragement to Christians in hard times. And because of these wonderful qualities in abundance even scholars have struggled to identify how all the pieces fit together. In the interest of biblical interpretation and ultimately for implicational guidance, making the distinction between *a* theme or *an* important issue and *the* primary focus is a worthy endeavor since the latter provides a unifying identity yielding greatest understanding of the relationship of the parts to the whole and wisdom for contemporary application.

What unifies this letter? A *ministry update* (1:12-26; 2:17-30; 4:11-15) is certainly in order from the pioneer missionary to support church with firmest hold on the rope. *Confirmation of a financial gift* and note of *thanksgiving* would have certainly been a significant concern (1:3-6; 4:10-19). The letter shows off how much the author and the recipients loved each other making the *personal greeting and connection* alone a worthy suggestion (1:1-3; 7-8; 4:1, 21-22). The evangelistic fervor of *gospel proclamation* strikes a chord since Paul made that his life ambition and portrays this particular church as adamantly partnering with him in it, a church full of fellow Christian workers and gospel soldiers (1:5-7; 27-30; 2:19-30; 4:15). The call for *unity* ("in one spirit, with one mind") is a very strong contender since that theme comprises so much square-footage in the letter. A final option, though, seems to win the day when it calls for *worthy heavenly citizen conduct* (1:27) of which unity is a prominent component and the call away from the un-citizen-like conduct among them with the

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resolution of a conflict (4:1-9).² That is, Philippians 4:1-9 is not a section of tying up loose ends, but the battleground that all of the words thus far assembled in the letter have been marching toward. This final contender, revealing the primary target of apostolic concern, provides the unifying context in which all suggestions find a compelling rationale. And thus, Paul's letter to the church at Philippi should principally be understood as a letter from a Christian conciliator.

Those leading the way in the ministry of Christian conciliation have indeed recognized many select passages and principles from this letter as valuable to constructing a peacemaking theology, including the following:

- They appreciate the significance of Philippians 4:2-3 as a conflict situation in the Bible.
- They pick up on the pronounced mood of joy (highlighted in the letter) as a way that followers of Christ may glorify God and how joy should be experienced especially in situations of conflict when it is needed most.³
- They cite a passion for the gospel from Philippians 1:27 as a practical assistant to building a church culture of peace.
- They emphasize the humility and vulnerability of Christ as the basis and example for conciliation efforts and point to Philippians 2:1-11 to show that Jesus Christ was the greatest peacemaker of all.
- They point to Philippians 2:4, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others," as teaching the need to consider the rival perspective and concerns, and a balanced double-sided approach to negotiation.
- They advocate reading and meditating upon Philippians 4:2-9 *directly* as a conciliation preparation strategy asking the Lord to reveal a personal critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has contributed to the conflict.
- They perceive that Philippians 4:2-9 (the whole section) and not just 4:2-3 pertains to Paul's treatment of the conflict scenario including the need to keep one's focus on the Lord and rejoicing in all that he has done (v. 4), the need for prayer in order to know peace and help our will align with God's (vv. 6-7), the need to

² William Varner sees the encouragement toward unity as the pinnacle of Paul's purposes for the letter, or as he calls it, "the warp and woof of the letter." William Varner, *Philippians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), xxi-xxvi or as also represented in his *A Linguistic Commentary* (2017), 3. The thesis of this paper deeply appreciates that point but sees that unity as a sub-component of the pinnacle purpose the call for worthy heavenly citizen conduct as the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche has not only jeopardized their unity but the other aspects of heavenly citizen conduct: their gospel proclamation efficiency and closing doors for opponents to have an influence within the church.

³ Ken Sande, "The Peacemaker's Pledge: A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution," Relational Wisdom 360, accessed September 7, 2020, <https://rw360.org/the-peacemakers-pledge>.

actively direct one's thought life toward what is true, honorable, right, pure... (v. 8), and the need for a godly model and mediator for both parties to follow after (v. 9).

Each of these passages and principles has been tested in the furnaces of ministry and relationship crisis and has proven to be the path of salvation, verifying that the letter is a storehouse of help for relationships in trouble. Although conciliation ministries have observed the advantage of parts the letter (themes, key passages, etc.) for conflict resolution resourcefulness, none have gone so far to conclude that the letter itself from start to finish is an exemplar for conciliation efforts which is the contention of this article. Imagine how many additional insights could be gleaned from this letter if its identity was fully realized!

But before moving forward to investigate those additional insights to be gleaned from approaching Philippians as a letter of conciliation, the strongest case for it being viewed as such may still be necessary. The claim that the entire letter has as its central focus the call to worthy heavenly citizen-like conduct and principal threat to that conduct in the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, the two women mentioned specifically in Philippians 4:2-3 is preeminently supported by the way that the letter is structured. The letter can be outlined as follows:

I. Opening Address and Greeting (1:1-2)

II. Opening Reflection on their Relationship and Paul's Circumstances (1:3-26)

III. Stand Firm as Heavenly Citizens (1:27-4:1)

Hinge Verse: *Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved (4:1).*

IV. Rising Up to Stand Firm Again as Heavenly Citizens (4:1-9)

V. Closing Reflection on their Relationship and Paul's Circumstances (4:10-20)

VI. Closing Address and Greeting (4:21-23)

The outline is presented in this way to showcase four pedagogically advantageous points:

- First, the outline is brief here as an introduction, condensing material in summary fashion, in order to enhance visual simplicity.⁴
- Second, the points are arranged chiastically so that the reader will quickly see the parallels between the opening and closing components of the letter common to 1st century epistolary form and the Pauline corpus (e.g., section I parallels VI as opening and closing address and greeting, and likewise II parallels V). Chiastic representation also allows the reader to clearly see the innermost components of the structure (III and IV) which should garner foremost attention.
- Third, outline elements III and IV are emphasized with bold type so that the reader might connect them to the claim regarding the intended focus of the letter – the call to worthy-heavenly-citizen like-conduct and principal application of that call in the resolution of the conflict.
- Fourth, outline element III is able to be condensed as significantly as it is (more than two chapters of a four-chapter epistle) because of the linguistic cohesion behind the verbal action of “standing firm” (στήκετε) in Philippians 1:27 and its reemergence in 4:1.⁵ That is to say, these two chapters significantly amplify what Paul may have insignificantly represented with one word, or that the material between the two occurrences of “stand firm” may have in essence been omitted to make his statement more directly – though that elision would obviously have meant the loss of the glorious material it contains.⁶

The outline then, if received, establishes the focal point of the letter and elevates the verse where they join: “Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved” (Phil. 4:1). This verse is the zenith of the letter – its summit or teetering point – where Paul both looks back upon all the momentum he has built toward conciliation from his first word, his very name, and looks forward to the unleashing of that momentum in application to the actual relationship in need of conciliation. In this case, the word “thus” (οὕτως) then can be seen as linked both to the previous conceptual framework of 1:27-4:1 and to the proceeding instructions of 4:2-9. If this church is to stand firm in the Lord, they will do so with hearts shaped by the content of 1:27-4:1 and steps immediately directed by the content of 4:2-9.

⁴ That is, as opposed to presenting each outline component with its sub-points, only the main summary level is listed.

⁵ Cf. William Varner, *Philippians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), xxv-xxvi or as also represented in his *A Linguistic Commentary* (2017), 6-7 for the discourse analysis principle of cohesion.

⁶ The close tie between these two occurrences of “stand firm” (στήκετε) are further buttressed by the close-proximity to the exhortation concerning worthy conduct as citizens (1:27 πειθαρχήσατε, 3:20 πειθαρχήσατε).

How Toward an Exegetical *Practical* Theology Yields Counseling the Word

Why stress the distinction that Paul's letter doesn't just contain material useful for conciliation ministry but that it actually *is* conciliation ministry? This point is stressed so that the reader grasps that the purest form of biblical counseling is the Bible itself. Before it becomes the source material for any other expression of the ministry of the Word, recognizing Scripture's voice first in the milieu of its counseling contexts is crucial to the reader's full reception of it, the intended interpretation of it, and the Spirit of God's discipleship aim for it. Its words are agents of communication from appointed servants of the Lord moved along by the Spirit of God to impart inspired answers, solutions, and help to actual persons having questions, problems, and trouble (2 Peter. 1:20-21).⁷ Thus, the Bible is not merely the *source* for biblical counseling; it *is* biblical counseling on display.

And for this reason, biblical counselors speak about *counseling the Word* because we need not transfer it from another milieu in order to prepare it for counseling ministry. Its very form has already been prepared for the battlefields biblical counselors face. By this point, I do not mean that every modern counseling scenario can be found with exact counterpart in Scripture, but that a robust appreciation of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture acknowledges that the Scripture in the way it is set forth by God equips the counselor for every good work both through the doctrinal content it supplies *and* through the method of delivery it employs (2 Tim. 3:14-17), as I have argued here previously.⁸ Biblical counselors receive those answers, solutions, and help from the biblical authors often as direct guidance for *what to say* and *how to say it* (while also examining them for precept or implication for what to say and how to speak when an exact counterpart is not contained in Scripture). That is, we observe, for example, not only Jesus's point in speaking to the scribes and Pharisees ("Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites!" Matt. 23) but also the very words that carry his rebuke. We notice not only the rationale of the comfort to his disciples ("Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me" John 14:1)

⁷ Cf. Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 13.

⁸ Joshua Clutterham, "Toward an Exegetical *Practical* Theology," *The Journal of Biblical Soul Care* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2018):9-57, especially 50-53. This article advanced the thesis that the meaning of Scripture, although rightly emphasized as important, should not be divorced from Scripture's delivery method (i.e., its actual words) and laid aside as if it had nothing substantial to contribute to the development of practical theology; rather, the delivery method of a text of Scripture should be considered exegetically *with* its meaning that the man of God may be equipped for every good work, and that this correction would bring particular benefit to the ministry of biblical counseling which operates in the same milieu of Scripture's own compositional context.

but again the very expression Jesus chose. And this applies to every other godly figure whose dialogic material recorded within the text is promoted to the reader as a model, but chiefly in the inspired authors of Scripture themselves to their readers. These referenced examples from Jesus were instances of direct counsel from counselor to counselee. Still other examples may be instances of counselor counseling another counselor (thereby becoming his counselee) as to how to counsel a third party; for example, Paul writes to Titus concerning his ministry to the Christians on the island of Crete, “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities...” (Titus 3:1ff) a counselor counseling another counselor as to how to counsel (“remind them”) and what to counsel them about (submission, godly speech and character, etc.). Scripture believes itself to be both doctrine *and* the expression of that doctrine. By approaching Scripture looking to be trained in both doctrine and method, ministers are equipped for greatest wisdom in ministry, and biblical counselors may be among the keenest observers to see their need of that wisdom on both fronts.

The implication of this point for the training of biblical counselors is that trainers should remember that Scripture’s own rhetoric is part of its robust design which makes it sufficient not only to teach content but also itself to reprove, correct, encourage, warn, model, train, etc. And biblical counselors do well when they learn *from Scripture* how to do what Scripture itself does. Becoming a *biblical* counselor requires that the counselor be a disciple of the Bible itself in how it counsels its readers. Otherwise, we might be guilty of the same category of critique used against the Christian integrationists when they go to Scripture to support their point of view or preferred method of therapy. If we start with Scripture’s point of view but treat its form as an obstacle to its answers, solutions, and help and so only return to it for methodological tips when we’ve exhausted our own methods, we too would be operating according to an integrationist approach. Counseling qualifies as *biblical* when it checks the boxes of spiritually discerning the wise words that would meet the need of the moment, communicating instruction consistent with Scripture rightly interpreted, promoting virtues and values affirmed as praiseworthy by God through the human writers of Scripture, and adhering to the godly methods of delivery outlined by the writers of Scripture or model by Jesus Himself.

What follows, then, in this article is a brief commentary of Paul’s letter to the Philippians with specific attention given to Philippians 4:1-9, where the breach in worthy heavenly citizen conduct comes most directly into view and Paul’s counsel is most critically applied, from the perspective that the whole letter aims to address this matter within the church.

An Examination of Philippians as Pauline Christian Conciliation Praxis

Receiving Paul's letter to the Philippians as Christian conciliation praxis may best be served by exploring the letter under 4 headings: 1) the platform of conciliation (1:1-4:1), 2) the persons/problem in need of conciliation (4:2-3), 3) the prescriptions for conciliation (4:4-9), and 4) the promises that bring hope to those seeking conciliation.

1) The Platform of Conciliation (1:1-4:1)

Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

In this single verse Paul's sums up the exhortation, argument, and affectionate appeal he has been making over the previous three chapters (1:1-4:1) as it also transitions to its most pressing response (4:2-9) signaled by his use of "therefore" or "so then" (ὥστε), his use of the adverb "thus" (οὕτως) which looks backward and forward, and the choice words which recall three previous sections:

- Use of direct address harkens back to the section I (Opening Address and Greeting) in 1:1-2 (to which he returns in section VI in 4:20-23),⁹
- Familial and affectionate language, verbal expressions of the desire to be with them, and the earnest concern and investment he has in them stemming from their relationship picks up section I (Opening Reflection on their Relationship and Paul's Circumstances) especially in 1:3-26 (to which he returns in section V in 4:10-20), and
- The reemergence of the call to stand firm closes the parenthesis of section III (Stand Firm as Heavenly Citizens) spanning 1:27-4:1.

Paul began his direct address in section I (1:1-12) when opening the letter in a traditional 1st century way, using an author + recipient + greeting formula (similar to the from-to-subject structure of modern emails). He describes himself and Timothy as servants/slaves (δοῦλοι) of Christ presently serving Christ in his ministry to his recipients, whom he addresses as saints (ἅγιοι). He names his ministry companion Timothy specifically as he will factor into the letter later as an example (2:19-23) of one who conducts himself as a heavenly citizen (1:27; 3:20) by standing firm in one mind/spirit with Paul, striving together for the faith of the gospel with Paul and soon will also do so alongside the Philippians when he arrives, and selflessly serving in such a dramatic contrast to the enemies of Christ around Paul who seek after their own interests. This Timothy, whom many of the recipients of the letter

⁹ Philippians 4:20-23, which will not receive significant attention in this article for concerns of length, returns to final greetings (farewells) from those with Paul to those in Philippi, which parallel section I. Likewise, Paul, after addressing the conflict problem, prescriptions for overcoming it, and promises to those at work on it, likewise returns to the global picture of his relationship with the saints-brothers-partakers-fellow workers who in Philippi to reflect upon his special relationship with him and the ways they have entered his circumstances for blessing.

already know, will contribute spiritual leadership and accountability regarding that which the letter from Paul instructs and requires of them, centrally the instruction regarding the conciliation efforts. Paul also specifically mentions the church leadership—overseers (pastors) and deacons—since their leadership, voice, and authority will be enlisted later in the letter when he calls some of them out (perhaps by name) to serve the two women in conflict (4:3). At the outset of this counseling by correspondence scenario, he secures the attention of the major players who will come alongside the relationship in crisis so that they might diligently and carefully receive every word. By calling out the overseers (pastors) *and deacons* he carries on the Jerusalem church’s model of depending on godly deacons to come alongside and practically serve church members in conflict situations (Acts 6:1-6). Finally, although “grace” (χάρις) and “peace” (εἰρήνη) were culturally common greetings, need of them from on high was certainly poignant for the challenge this church faced. The greeting intends to refresh them with a new beginning since he aims to continue to be a channel of God’s grace and peace (4:7, 9) to them in what follows. He wants them to know abundant grace and peace *within* as they have experienced it *with God* and as they come to realize it *among themselves*, a blessing intended to stay with them.

But introductions do not conclude with who one is and who is the other; they go beyond to who the parties are together and who they might become with each other’s help by God’s grace. And for that reason, Paul—as is his custom—continues from the greeting formula to a reflection on their relationship (thanksgiving, affectionate longing to be near, and a prayer on their behalf) and an update about his circumstances (keeping him from drawing near) in section II. His love for them and hope for them overcome his identification of them. “He begins by hinting to them that he is no partisan: he offers prayers and thanksgivings for *all*; he hopes well of *all*; he looks upon *all* as companions in grace; his heart yearns after *all* in Christ Jesus.”¹⁰ Their conflict does not define them even though it may presently dominate their interactions. In Philippians 4:1, he calls them “brothers” (a familial term used to describe fellow Christians used of the Philippians throughout the letter, 1:12; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 8) to recall this section specifically. Elsewhere he calls them “beloved” (2:12; 4:1), “saints” (ἅγιοι, 1:1), fellow “partakers” of grace (συγκοινωνοί, 1:7), and “Philippians” (οὗσιν ἐν Φιλιπποῖς, 1:1; Φιλιππήσιοι, 4:15), and his “joy” and “crown” (χαρὰ and στέφανός respectively in 4:1)—terms which both honor the rich friendship between the parties and summon their godly character for the need of the moment, and the call to action coming to them. These titles parallel three frames of reference that Paul wishes to consume their perspective about the challenge at hand:

¹⁰ J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1927), 67.

- 1) Present life as a narrow window of opportunity for hard labor in service to Christ and one another (marks of which are pervasive in the letter),
- 2) A future unique day, called the “Day of the Lord” or “Day of Christ” (1:6, 10-11; 2:2, 11, 16; 4:1), a momentary event when all people will give an account for their activity during that window of opportunity, and in which church leaders will feel the weight of defeat (shame and vanity) or thrill of victory (“joy” and “crown”) (cf. 2:2, 16, and 4:1)
- 3) A forever citizenship, the consequential reality of that which occurred during the window of opportunity and the day of Christ (1:27; 3:20-21)

What the Philippians-saints-brothers-partakers-beloved do about the conflict among them *now* will boom from the lips of Jesus *on that great day*, and echo *for eternity* to the joy and reward of Paul and these church leaders or to their sorrow. He prays that their love for Christ and one another would increase, and their discernment about what is at stake would abound as well. As for Paul, he grasps the sobriety of these perspectives himself and speaks about his own circumstances – some of which involve his own conflicts – through them as a model for them to follow in 1:12-26. Paul’s writing of the letter and future visit (which he hopes to make, 2:24) is necessary for their progress in joy and spiritual maturation (1:23-25) for the advantage of Christ’s honor and glory (1:20-21). And Paul is confident that these labors in this short window will result in ultimate deliverance – future vindication in the heavenly court room when he is found to be in the right, having sided in life with Christ and a reward on the day of Christ (1:19; 2:16), when he presents the Philippian church under his care to Christ as “pure and blameless” (1:10), “blameless and innocent children of God without blemish” (2:15), and a church reconciled within consisting of relationships at peace with one another (4:2-9).

Finally, Philippians 4:1 gathers all the material from section III (Stand Firm as Heavenly Citizens) with the reemergence of the call to “stand firm” (στήκετε) first introduced in 1:27, where Paul issues the first command of the letter: “conduct yourselves as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” He then equates this command (“conduct yourselves as citizens”) with the action of *standing firm*, followed by three sub-components of what citizen-conduct or firm-standing would resemble:

- Unity, being one and the same in mind/spirit/soul (1:27c)
- Teamwork in gospel proclamation (1:27d)
- Lack of intimidation toward opponents of Christ and his Church (1:28a-30)

If the Philippians conduct themselves now in the short window of their lives’ opportunity, they will be pure and blameless before Jesus on the day of Christ and begin to enjoy already the blessings of their forever citizenship. And Paul unpacks these three points in the two chapters (2:1-3:19) proceeding from 1:27-30:

Unity, being one and the same in mind/spirit/soul (1:27c ~ 2:1-11)

He explores the first way that they will stand firm by further calling them to have the same mind, by putting off their own desire to be first and to put on the practice of preferring others, remembering that this is just what Jesus did in his incarnation and obedience unto death – for which God raised him up.

Teamwork in gospel proclamation (1:27d ~ 2:12-30)

He tackles the next element of standing firm (“striving together for the faith of the gospel”) by first urging them to effort exerted to live holy in this life and in pursuing the great commission (2:12-13) – which is then supported by the exposition of the worthy heavenly citizen conduct of 3 exemplary men who are striving together for the faith of the gospel: Paul himself (2:14-18), Timothy (2:19-24), and Epaphroditus (2:25-30).

Lack of intimidation toward opponents of Christ and his church (1:28a-30 ~ 3:1-19)

Paul turns to speak about the opposition that the Philippians are facing. He identifies the opponents in their midst with the lineage of the wicked leaders of Israel from their history (3:1 ~ Isaiah 56:9-12), laments that he used to be one of them, but praises God that he was stripped of a false righteousness and given the only righteousness that matters with God – that which is from God and on the basis of faith. He urges his readers to maintain this same understanding and to not be intimidated by opposition that wants them to think there is something more that they need, or need to accomplish in order to merit a right standing with God. He reminds them that their opponents are those who are in trouble with God because of their opposition, and their lifestyle itself shows that they are headed for destruction.

Section III resolves itself by returning to the matter of a forever heavenly citizenship and the hope of the full expression of it, for which they will best prepare *now* by standing firm to be fully transformed for *at the day of Christ* (3:20-4:1). And thus, Philippians 4:1 wondrously encapsulates in 15/21 words (Greek-NA28/English-ESV) what Paul more fully expresses in approximately 1200/1700 words over three chapters of the letter – each section recalled to bear weight on the following 8 verses specifically.

2) The Persons/Problem in need of Conciliation (4:2-3)

Philippians 4:2-3 ²I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Up to this point, Paul has mentioned several persons – himself and Timothy of course, the Philippians church leadership (overseers/pastors and deacons), some rival preachers, gospel opponents, Jesus who died and rose again some 20 years prior, the Philippians messenger Epaphroditus, and those gospel opponents again – but it is only in 4:2-3 that we are introduced to the central cast of the letter by name: two women – Euodia and Syntyche, and at least two church leaders – Suzuge (or whoever “true companion” is if not a name, perhaps an endearing term used for Luke, the faithful ministry companion of Paul) and Clement, among other fellow workers.

Apparently, these two women were very prominent senior members of the Philippian church – participants long enough to have served with Paul and his companions during their times in Philippi. They were not only prominent but respected and seem to have really been examples to the church of Christians who are laboring for the gospel; Paul describes them as “struggling/contending with him,” an emphasis on their bravery in the fight. If these women were in your church, you would likely think of them as pillars of the church and models of evangelism. Paul speaks confidently that these are Christian women (their names are written in the book of life); the same record that Paul anticipates vindicating him in the heavenly courtroom will also vindicate them. Although the conflict was likely known by the church as a whole, it might have shocked some in the church to see these prominent women called out for vices. Paul is accustomed to the procedure of handling apostolic letters. What was penned by his hand would be read aloud to the whole congregation. Imagine Euodia and Syntyche suddenly in the spotlight when they hear their names read and Paul addressing them specifically for a less than praiseworthy matter. All eyes turn to them and the issue which may have already been uncomfortable for the church is now clearly exposed. And since these letters were to be shared among the churches, their un-citizen-like conduct and its allowance to linger will become known to all.

Paul speaks to them directly with a strong request (παρακαλῶ), translated variously as “I urge,” “I implore,” “I beseech,” “I entreat,” “I appeal.” There is great passion behind this request. The appeal is that they would have the same mind, one of the three components of standing firming and conduct oneself as a heavenly citizen. This is the same appeal issued to the church as a whole in chapter 2 (2:2, 5) – to have the same mind, to have the mindset of Christ who took on flesh and was obedient unto death. The reader is not told the specifics about their un-citizen-like conduct that has divided these women. It may very well be that they had taken a good desire and turned it into an inordinate demand – perhaps conflicting suggestions for how the missions budget ought to be used, or opposing plans for hospitably receiving Christian workers coming into town. Whatever the specifics may be, we can infer that selfishness, self-centered thinking got the better of them and was at the root of the offenses toward each other, and that the conflict had impacted their actions

aimed at each other. It is also clear that they had not been living rightly toward each other for considerable time – long enough for the church and Epaphroditus to become concerned, for Epaphroditus to be sent and arrive in Rome to meet Paul and inform him about the matter. Connecting the dots, the appeal is highly appropriate and requests strongly that they would consider the interests of each other as more important than their own, that they wouldn't only look out for their own interests but also the interests of others (2:4-5).

The problem may have been compounded by a church leadership who had not acted with adequate attention to help the conflict become resolved. Paul's command "to help by taking part with someone in an activity (lit. 'take hold of together'), *support, aid, help*" (συλλαμβάνου) may infer that they have not previously exerted that effort."¹ (Paul uses a similar word in 3:12 to describe Christ's pursuit and intervention in his life, and here he means to describe the type of intervention he expects from the leaders into these women's lives.) Perhaps the best parallel for Paul's request is Peter's use of it in Luke 5:7 when at the request of Jesus, the fishermen threw the net on the other side of the boat and caught so many fish that they could not bring them in the boat – requesting "Help!" If these church leaders had not been providing this type of intervening help, they were being required to now by an apostle. If they had been, the apostle calls them to a new campaign of it.

As long as this conflict lingers in the church, and in these women's relationship particularly, they cannot also conduct themselves as citizens of heaven worthy of the gospel of Christ and stand firm – and all that entails:

- No unity. They are not having the same mind, which means that they are not loving each other, and are not unified. Jesus said that people would know his disciples by their love for one another; instead, they have made the church in Philippi into a Christian fight club.
- No teamwork. They are not striving side by side for the faith of the gospel; instead, the conflict has distracted their witness and kept them from serving together. (Imagine how these women not wanting to be around each other would have impacted the weekly gathering, weekday fellowships, or outreach evangelism and service.)
- No resistance to opposition. And instead of opposition being an external reality from doctrinal opponents of the gospel that they faced together, these women have brought opposition into the church itself! We can quickly imagine factions forming, and church members taking sides.

¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 955.

And thus, the problem, without any of its details is identified by Paul as very significant and urgent.

3) The Prescription for Conciliation (4:3-9)

Philippians 4:4-9 ³Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

With the platform established and the problem elucidated, Paul issues to the church as a whole and these women particularly 7 prescriptions for conciliation for rising up from a fallen relationship to stand firm again.

Prescription #1: Enlist Help (4:3)

As already introduced, Paul issues a command to two men particularly (likely church leaders) and other mature church members (“fellow workers”) to help these women live in harmony in the Lord. Christians need help from other Christians to live worthily as heavenly citizens and at some points more than others! Paul’s love for them discerned what they should have discerned for themselves it is necessary to come and help these two women to accomplish what they are stuck on their own to do.

Prescription #2: Rejoice in the Lord Always (4: 4)

The call to rejoice period, let alone rejoicing in the midst of conflict, can only be accomplished by putting conflict in context. Paul signals the first point of context for conflict is “in the Lord.” As such, there is always great cause for rejoicing when circumstances are seen in the context of *in the Lord*. But Paul has also demonstrated himself a rejoicing in the midst of difficult circumstances (1:12-18) which stems from a striving-together-for-the-faith-of-the-gospel aspect of standing firm. He furthermore stands firm with a soteriology that provides for him access to a righteousness greater

than his own so that he will be found in Christ, welcomed by him in the context of a future vindication for being on Jesus' side in his conflicts during this short window of opportunity which is his life. Paul is not advocating a rejoicing *because of conflict* but a rejoicing that conflict is comparatively a small experience of suffering on the path to a future full of joy and peace, and is rather part of the various opportunities that come our way in which we may choose the mindset of Christ to consider the interests of others as better than our own in humility, to consider the cause of gospel proclamation as more precious than our preferences, and preparation to face adversity and suffering as not something to be taken lightly.

Prescription #3: Let your Gentleness be Known to All (4:5a)

The third prescription from Paul is that the parties not rush to judgement. This “gentleness,” or “reasonableness,” “graciousness” or even “yielding,” “kindness,” “courteousness,” “tolerance,” “forbearing spirit,” “justly goodness” (as the word is variously translated) is to be so pervasive and thus plainly evident that all witnesses to the conflict see it and would be willing to characterize or label the person exhibiting it by it (e.g., *a gracious person*). This person avoids violence and doesn't love to quarrel. He takes seriously the proverb that “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1). When Joseph resolved to put Mary away instead of exposing her seemingly elicit pregnancy (for which she could have been killed), he was showcasing this type of gentleness. This gentleness absorbs the wrong of others; it doesn't excuse it but does look for every redeeming quality in him or her so as to treat the person with a goodness that he/she at that moment is not meriting. One by-product of following this counsel is that everyone around you can see that you are at least the one person in the conflict that is trying to obey God's command in Romans 12:16-18 “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” But Paul also envisions that one person's commitment to a gentleness known by all may also encourage the other party toward the same behavior. Conflict always has a personal cost. By letting your gentleness be known to all, you minimize that cost, in humility taking a loss to your pride by trusting that God's grace is more than sufficient to reimburse.¹²

¹² James also takes up the task of describing this “gentleness” in James 3:17: “¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle [same word], open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸”

Prescription #4: Don't be Anxious about Anything (4:6a)

Paul repeats a command of Jesus given during the sermon on the mount (Matt. 6:31). There Jesus relates many common things that people become anxious about. Anxiety is another word or expression for the concept of fear. We become anxious when we fear: (a) fear that we will *not* get something we need or desperately want, or (b) fear that we *will* get something we do not want and desperately desire to avoid. Jesus instructed clearly that worry accomplishes no constructive end. Worry is the hole that we dig ourselves into at the foot of the mountain we wish to overcome. Here Paul simply says “don't be anxious *about anything*.” (Actually, he says, “Be anxious/worry about nothing.”)¹³

Prescription #5: Make Known your Requests to God (4:6b)

This command closely related to the previous; instead of investing their resources of life in becoming anxious, they are to invest them into making their requests known to the Lord. If you are to worry about nothing, it must mean that you make known your requests to God *about everything*. They are to make these requests with prayer, with petition, and with thanksgiving.

Prescription #6: Regard/Reckon Things that are Excellent (6:8)

Usually translated as “think about,” “dwell upon,” “meditate on,” or “ponder,” Paul prescribes to the church concerning this conflict not only thinking about something but also to come to a decision about it or identification of it. Paul used the same word and concept in Philippians 3:13 when he said that he does not “regard” the resurrection as something he has already attained; rather than merely thinking about the resurrection and whether it is something he has already attained, he has considered it *and* decided that it is something he is still yet to attain to. The point here is that those involved in the conflict must make up their mind about what they are hearing, and discern whether it is excellent. If what they are hearing is

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” What this passage from James targets and the rest of the verse in Philippians (5:5b) has in common is the point that *conflict always concerns God*. In the outworking of sinful conflict, God is seldom in central focus, if he is even in the picture. People in conflict don't think about God; they think about themselves and each other—about being offended, defrauded, etc. Instead of prayer, people in conflict sulk, simmer, and become bitter. They don't ask for God's help; they take things into their own hands...and God is grieved. As Christians are concerned, God is grieved that worldly concerns garner more glory in hearts wherein God's Spirit has been sent to indwell.

¹³ At this point, it is interesting to pause and consider the comprehensive nature of these inspired prescriptions: “Rejoice *always*” (4:4), “Let your gentleness be known *to all people*” (4:5a), “Don't worry *about anything*” (4:6), perhaps “Make your requests known to God” *about everything* (4:6b), a *long list* of excellent things to reckon (4:8), and call to do them *all* (4:9).

indeed excellent, they may continue to have it influence them. But if not, they are to discard it quickly.

And how are they to deduce whether it is excellent? Excellent things may also be described as the following: **True, Honorable, Right/just, Pure, Lovely, Commendable, Excellent, Praiseworthy.** Think of these qualities with acronym that sounds like an over-the-counter prescription. You are at a spiritual pharmacy and you aren't looking for acetaminaphin, or ibuprofen, oxycodone, etc., you are looking for **THRPL-CEP**. Paul's prescription to those in conflict is to have regard for those things (and only those things) that are True-Honorable-Right-Pure-Lovely Commendable-Excellent-Praiseworthy.

Why would regarding these types of things be necessary in the context of conflict? Those in conflict are often tempted to think about things, for example, that are *not* true, or to exaggerate a negative perception (he *never* keeps his word, he is *always* messing *everything* up), when truthfully that person may be failing but probably not *always failing*. Those responding poorly to conflict typically dishonor others with their thoughts, or choose to think of others as not worthy of time and consideration. They might hope that they will experience troubling circumstances instead of reasonable justice and appropriate accountability correcting their actions.

Prescription #7: Practice those Excellent Things yourself (follow Paul's Example)

(4:9)

Finally, Paul prescribes the Philippians church not just to notice excellent things (especially in godly examples), but to do them themselves. Following this prescription requires great faith since it is difficult to do what is right when sinfully doing wrong seems attractive. But Paul is not asking of them anything that he is not seeking to require of himself. He asks of them to approve that which is lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy, and he has prayed for them that they would do just that (1:10). Actually, the whole letter is a demonstration of Paul following his own counsel here. Paul himself is giving the instruction for conflict resolution here that he himself has been following in the writing of this letter:

- Prescription #1: Paul sends these women help in the form of instruction and urges those present to help.
- Prescription #2: Paul is rejoicing in his circumstances and what he believes is possible for the Philippians' future and lets them know his rejoicing *in the Lord* and over them throughout the letter.

- Prescription #3: Instead of being angry at these women for acting this way or the church leaders for not providing sufficient help, he is gentle. He expresses his love for them and desire to be with them.
- Prescription #4: He resists anxiety about them
- Prescription #5: He makes known to God his requests about them with prayer, petition, and thanksgiving.
- Prescription #6: Instead of letting his thoughts run loose and conclude with ideas that are not true, honorable, right, pure... thinking the worst about the situation and those involved, he has decided to remember his experience with these women in which they exemplified the conduct of heavenly citizens. He remembers to regard them as fellow workers in need of God's grace, continued prayer, and encouragement.

Each of these first six prescriptions are reviewed here in order to make the point that the Paul is able to issue the last prescription (to follow his example), because he himself first took these prescriptions seriously; he followed these prescriptions to the "T" at each point of the letter!

4) The Promises that Bring Hope to those Seeking Conciliation (4:4-9)

Philippians 4:4-9 ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. **The Lord is at hand;** ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And **the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and **the God of peace will be with you.**

The final heading of Paul's conciliation approach further demonstrates the wisdom of God offered to biblical counselors, those caring for souls, as Paul not only provides the platform and prescriptions that will allow this relationship between the two women to rise up again to stand firm, but also provides in the midst of those prescriptions the promises of God needed to be depended upon for hope to keep going. But these promises are not given in a simple straight-forward list; instead, they are woven between the prescriptions. Why? (We are meant to ask the question.) The answer to that question is grasped once again by understanding how the Bible itself is designed to counsel, to change hearts—not just to supply information. If God intended it just to supply information, he might have created

mankind very differently, equipped with some type of data-exchange port for file transfer. Or he might have designed the Bible differently, organized like an encyclopedia in alphabetical order. When the prescriptions themselves seem to overwhelm those embroiled in conflict, it is God's goodness offered through his promises that shows up to provide the courage and strength to keep going.

Promises are confident expressions of the will concerning the future outcome of personal efforts or confident claims about a future reality as a result of external efforts or forces. We do not appreciate promises because they are voiced confidently but when they prove themselves reliable. We often regard promises as reliable when we believe them to be reasonable or the results foreseeable. In Scripture, a promise is better judged to be reliable when the *person* making the promise is reliable—either because his character has been proven as faithful, or because that person's will cannot be resisted, or efforts cannot do anything but succeed. Thus, when promises are uttered by this type of reliable person, the only difference between that promise (from a reliable person) and reality is time.

A promise becomes valuable, though, not only when it is reliable but when it has the effect of depositing hope, when that which is reliably promised looks forward to something *good*. Terrible things can be promised reliably, but we don't value them unless the effect of that promise warns us about how to evade destruction. Promises that speak about good or rescue us from harm put our anxieties, worries, and fear to an end. For example, the fear and anxiety that rushes upon a child who is asked to jump from danger to safety, or to try something for the first time, that fear is canceled when the promise from a trustworthy parent is given: "I will catch you" or "you're going to like it if you give it a try." In fact, if you can remember, so much of early life was lived on the basis of promises, because young people have no other life experience to operate by. The secret to that reflection is that people never outgrow the need for promises, because there is always somewhere that you have not been, or a situation you've never encountered. When a new situation arises, and the fear rises, you either decide to operate solely upon what you know, or you decide that you are going to return to sweet promises from those you've decided to trust along the path of your life. But in contrast to at best mostly reliable promises that we might receive from trusted confidantes, the Scripture makes plain that God makes promises and that he earnestly keeps them. The doctrine of the faithfulness of God is wrapped up in his reliability, will, and security when making and keeping promises (Deut. 7:9; Josh. 23:14; Isa. 55:11). He puts his reputation on the line whenever he makes promises. Although he is under no obligation to make promises to his creatures, he does so as an expression of his character and love for others with whom he enters covenant.

And Paul, in the purposes of God and by his Spirit, records three promises in this passage specifically designed to help fallen relationships rise up to stand firm again unto

worthy heavenly citizen conduct. For these women hearing their problem read aloud to their church after hearing their framework of their lives being recast as a short window of opportunity, looking for a unique day, before a forever experience as citizens, and the beginning of prescriptions as to what they and the church around them is specifically to do to help them, they will need these promises to complete the change God intends to bring to their hearts and life together. After giving a prescription to the church leadership to help them, Paul directs six more prescriptions directly at Euodia and Syntyche but in a paced fashion – two prescriptions and then a promise, two more prescriptions and another promise, followed by two final prescriptions and a final promise. What follows reviews those six prescriptions and the promises that support the hearts that need to receive them.

Promise #1: The Lord is (and will be) near (4:5b).

Because individual conflicts are surrounded by a bigger activity of God in the world full of joy for the Christian, Paul has already prescribed that these women (and the church around them) “rejoice in the Lord always” (4:4). Seeing this bigger activity helps frame conflict as an opportunity to glorify God, to serve others (considering their interests as preferable, above personal interests), and maturing in a relationship of trust and obedience to Christ (the one who himself for the interests of his people endured the cross, cf. 2:4-11, and Heb. 12:1-3). He has also prescribed them to have such a gracious and forbearing spirit to the degree that a desire to glorify God and not to serve self has become their *modus operandi*. Sadly, conflict always has a personal cost. But by letting gentleness be known to all, that cost can be minimized when in humility one takes a loss to pride by trusting that God’s grace is more than sufficient to reimburse. “God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5; Prov. 3:34). “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; Prov. 29:23; Luke 1:52). But these two prescriptions might be unimaginable to those in conflict, who feel the pain of insults, persecutions, thefts, betrayals, etc.

When the prescriptions meet all of the hardships of conflict, that is when the precious promise of God shows up: the Lord is near (4:5b). The statement that God is near is also a promise that *he will be near* – a promise that speaks (a) accountability to the offender, (b) comfort to the offended, and (c) urgency to both. The-God-who-is-near recalls the day of Christ frame of reference, a theme running its course throughout this letter. All people will be resurrected to stand before the judge of the whole earth, by the criteria of (1) whose side they were on – Jesus’s or those who oppose Jesus, (2) those who lived for their own interest or for the interest of Jesus or others for Jesus’s sake, (3) whether they stood firm or went with the flow of culture...

and some on the way to that throne and before that throne will find peace. The point of this verse is that *the judge is watching now*. He is near enough to actively participate in what is happening in the conflict *now*, and soon enough he comes to render a verdict that rights all the wrongs. The implication of this promise is that the church and those most specifically at odds with each other in conflict must care about the outcome of his judgment *now* because there will be no second chance when standing before the Lord to change anything about the conflict that will influence his everlasting decisions there.

The effect of this promise is threefold: comfort, accountability, and urgency. The Lord being near is a great comfort to the one who is letting his/her gentleness be known to all and is experiencing the loss of receiving ill treatment from the other party. It is comforting to realize that Jesus knows full well the personal cost what he is asking by prescribing rejoicing and gentleness. He himself bore the wrongs that allow him to sympathize with us. And he who was so alone and beaten so cruelly on the night that he was betrayed shows up through promises to walk with you through the trial. The Lord being near also means that he will hold accountable the sin done in conflict so that this statement is a warning for those in conflict to remember that the Lord is seeing it all. Finally, the Lord being near means that there will soon be a reckoning over everything that takes place in conflict and the state of the relationship that arrives at the judgement *soon*. The point is that both parties should be eager to resolve the conflict quickly, while they still have a chance.

When in conflict you decide to rejoice in what God is doing such that you set your heart to be a servant useful to his master, humble, ready to yield, ready to forbear with graciousness, ready to lose something, God is glorified and you are sustained with a promise – the Lord is near, a promise so important to him that it is one of his names: Emanuel (“God is with us”).

Promise #2: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (4:7).

After two prescriptions and a promise, Paul moves one to a new set of prescriptions with a promise: the comprehensive direction away from being anxious and toward making requests known to God comprehensively. Anxiety, in the context of conflict, sounds like panicked questions and statements (“What else is he going to take from me?” or “What is she up to?” or “Who is she turning against me now?” or “What if they sue us?”) and self-destroys with thinking the worst, preparing for the worst, and living as if the worst answer to those questions was already reality. It calculates resources without the sufficient grace of God to handle them (cf. 2 Cor.

12:-9-10). And to these worries, God says through Paul: “Don’t do it. No, stop, no more. Don’t worry about anything.” As if this prescription were not already a challenge, he adds to it the prescription on the other side of the coin; instead of being anxious, they are to invest their energies into making requests to God with prayer, petition/supplication (asking), and thanksgiving. All their anxious thoughts are to be turned into humble requests with an attitude of thanksgiving—a straightforward prescription to not worry about anything but to pray about everything, to ask God for favor and resources to meet needs, and then to thank him for what he has done already and will continue to do.

But at this point in the conflict scenario, those involved may be *full* of anger and worry to the degree that they cannot quiet themselves from anxiety, or sorrow, or still themselves enough to pray. Making requests to God may seem to be the opposite of what *must* happen. (This is a time for action, not atrophy!) And these prescriptions amidst the chaos and passion of their thoughts and emotions may seem impossible. But that is when the promise of God arrives: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When Jesus was preparing for his betrayal and crucifixion, he spoke about a peace that the world cannot give to you (John 14:27). There is a peace that surpasses all our understanding. It is the peace that is the by-product of being loved by God in Christ. In conflict, the temptation that enters is either typically a fixation on what peace would look like or what arrangement of life would bring peace in, and both are typically examples of a peace that the world gives. But God knows about peace much better than us. We know only what we have experienced in this sin-cursed world in community with people that we sin against and who sin against us. But there was a brief season on earth when people walked in actual peace with God and each other, and occasionally we experience an echo of that time when someone lets their gentleness be known to us, or when our thanksgiving toward God drowns out the suspicions about what God is keeping from us. There is a peace that shows up that transcends our understanding. And God’s promise is that this beyond-understanding peace will guard our inner man from everything that seeks to take our peace away! Like little children who continually come back to their parents to ask for a drink only to take a sip before returning to play, our refusal to worry and a commitment to prayerful petition and thanksgiving are visits to our heavenly father who dispenses peace to us and renews our hearts with peace and fortifies our hearts with peace. Heavy doses of out-of-this-world peace are the delicacies served at every meal of anxiety-free prayer. Can you imagine that result when your opposition aims to offend—a mind covered with perfect peace? Isaiah spoke this promise to the

inhabitants of Jerusalem in the midst of the Assyrian war: “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you” (Isa. 26:3). As Euodia, Syntyche, the Philippian church (and us) reserve themselves to these prescriptions, they feast upon the refreshment of God’s perfect peace in the midst of conflict.

Promise #3: The God of peace will be with you (4:9b).

Strengthened by the promises of the Lord being near and his peace guarding their hearts, Paul enters a final round of two prescriptions with a promise. He first prescribes them to reckon things that are excellent. Standing at the gate fortified by the peace of God, they are to recognize/identify the difference between those things that are allowed into the heart and those things that are not. And God is very particular about things which are on his guest list. (Remember the acronym and spiritual pharmacy of prescription #6.) Their initials are THRPL-CEP. And Paul prescribed not only to regard those excellent things, but to actually do them by believing them, speaking them, and conducting themselves in such a way described by them.

Such a high calling to those already drained from the hurt and pain of relational conflict might have sounded crushing “How can we regard and do only excellent things when our lives are a crash site?” The temptation to use tools of speech and conduct to take revenge instead of those THRPL-CEP activities may be strong, and the thoughts of how hard it is to do the right thing when the other person doesn’t seem to want to reciprocally contribute. And that is when the promise of God enters in: the God of peace will be with you (9b).

It’s one thing for the Lord to be *near*, and another for him to *give you peace*, but it is still more marvelous that the God who is near for comfort and who gives you peace will be with you. He does not only give peace but *is* peace; he who is peace gives himself to you. The promise is “You are not alone in this. The God of peace is with you.”

Conclusion

Why did God care to give this letter and these verses particularly to the Philippian church? First, God gave them because he loves peace; he loves peace among his people. And real peace exists on the other side of conflict; he doesn’t want us to settle for shallow relationships that can never produce peace but to arrive at a real experience of peace that exists on the other side of conflict – having weathered the storm, with the platform of conciliation our compass, the prescriptions for conciliation the directions to get there, and the promises of conciliation that inspire us with hope to keep going. Second, God gave

them these verses because the ultimate peacemaker loves it when we become like Him (“Blessed are the peacemakers...” Matt. 5:9). Third, God gave them these verses because he is recreating for us a world of peace and wants us to see glimpses of it now in relationship with each other. The world of peace he first created *is now broken* but he is remaking a world of peace. Fourth, he gave these verses because they were needed progressively. An amazing feature of these prescriptions and promises is that they are cyclical. The one whose heart and mind is guarded by the peace of God so that he is able to put on THRPL-CEP in thought and deed into practice is also more readily able to rejoice in the Lord and to let his forbearing spirit be known to all, comforted by the Lord who is near, and resists worry and makes his requests known to God, guarded by the peace of God. We call this dynamic “progressive sanctification,” the process of God making you more holy (devoted to Him) and joyful through that holiness. And fifth, finally, God gave them these verses because he also wanted generations of Christians to be counseled by them and to counsel one another with them.

Biblical counselors (those in the ministry of soul care) ought to observe therefore every detail for direct guidance as to approaches, perspectives, motivations and even phrases, vocabulary, tone of voice, and emotion for similar counseling cases. The “4 P” summary may also be a useful tool to help remind the conciliator of the content of this direct guidance:

Platform (Philippians 1:1 – 4:1, 10-23): The platform of conciliation is first (a) the relationship in which the conciliator aims to model and remind of the sufficient supply of all the grace, peace, thanksgiving, relational investment, and longing to be near that is available from God in Christ for the Christian. It is also (b) the three frameworks for life – the present short window of opportunity, the day of Christ event, and the forever heavenly citizenship. Last, it is exhortation to conduct oneself as a heavenly citizen also presented as a call to “stand firm” – an activity that requires three subcomponents: (1) unity of mind/spirit/soul with one another by adopting the mindset of Christ which prefers first the interests of others; (2) teamwork in gospel proclamation, a striving together activity; and (3) not fearing opposition by virtue of a solid doctrine of salvation (positional, progressive, and prospective).

Problem (Philippians 4:2-3): Paul identifies the problem in need of conciliation not in terms of all of its twisted details but in terms of its departure from the harmony God intends for them.

Prescriptions (Philippians 4:3-9): Paul issues 7 prescriptions for conciliation – 1 for the church (especially its leadership), and 6 for the dissenting parties split into 6 specific

prescriptions (and indirectly for the church who are called upon to help them with the prescriptions). Those might be more easily remembered with the following keywords: (1) *Assist*, (2) *Persist* in rejoicing, (3) *Subsist* in gentleness, (4) *Desist* from anxiety, (5) Shortlist your requests to God, (6) Resist things not excellent and insist on THRPL-CEP, and (7) Enlist yourself as a doer of excellent things.

Promises (Philippians 4:5, 7, 9): Paul supports the six prescriptions directed at those in conflict and the one prescription of help with 3 promises of God that he is near, that the peace he supplies will guard them, and

Let all those involved in biblical counseling/soul care, who aim to do conciliation *biblically*, hear and see this inspired exemplar.

solī Deo gloria

The Dangerous Theology of the Enneagram

Rhenn Cherry¹

The Dangerous Theology of the Enneagram

The Enneagram has been widely promoted as an ancient personality typing tool, and its claim to contain “spiritual wisdom” has contributed to its increasing popularity in churches.² But a careful evaluation of its history reveals that while the Enneagram symbol itself has a somewhat mysterious origin, the symbol’s personality typing was developed and applied by secular psychiatrists in the 1970s.³ Once those personality typologies, known as Ennea-types, were assigned to the Enneagram symbol and taught by a Gestalt psychiatrist, American Jesuits further propagated the use of the Enneagram and endorsed its spiritualization that continues today.⁴ An examination of the Enneagram works of Catholic priest Richard Rohr and Jesuit teacher Don Riso revealed their theological influence on current Enneagram writers who are popular among evangelicals.⁵ But a biblical critique of

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² Katherine Burgess, “The Enneagram Is Taking Off Among Christians: It’s a Tool That Maps Out People’s Nine Personality Types,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, TN, February 16, 2020, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/life/2020/02/04/why-enneagram-type-test-popular-with-christians/4600988002/>; Christopher L. Heuertz, *The Sacred Enneagram: Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017); Don Richard Riso, and Russ Hudson, *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality Types* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 19.

³ Carolyn Bartlett, “Viewing Therapy Through a New Lens,” *Annals Of The American Psychotherapy Association* 11, no. 1 (2008): 34; Claudio Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures: Self-Analysis for the Seeker* (Nevada City, CA: Gateways Publishers, 1990), xix.

⁴ Don Richard Riso, *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 17-18; Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, xix; Jonathan Merritt, “What is the ‘Enneagram,’ and why are Christians suddenly so Enamored by it?” <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>, Sept. 5, 2017 (Accessed September 18, 2018).

⁵ Ian Morgan Cron, and Suzanne Stabile, *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016), 19; Heuertz, 9-11; Suzanne Stabile, *The Path in Between Us: An*

the seminal Enneagram works of Rohr and Riso revealed a low view of Scripture, inaccurate doctrine of man and sin, and neglect of the Holy Spirit's role in the Enneagram's process of biblical change. The theology demonstrated in the influential works of Enneagram authors Rohr and Riso is contrary to orthodox evangelical theology. Therefore, the Enneagram should be rejected by evangelical Christians for use in biblical counseling and other ministries.

First, a brief explanation of the Enneagram symbol and an overview of its conflicted historical origin will be provided. Next, the development history of the Enneagram personality typology, its various forms, and how it "works" will be summarized. Third, the Enneagram typology's use in secular psychology and psychiatry, as well as in Christian ministry will be surveyed. Then the theology of two influential Jesuit authors who promoted and taught the use of the Enneagram will be critiqued. In this article, the explanations of the Enneagram types, methodologies, and meanings are not intended to be exhaustive. But sufficient background information on the Enneagram is provided to position a brief theological evaluation of the influential writing of Enneagram authors Rohr and Riso.

The Enneagram Symbol and Personality Typology

The Enneagram *symbol* is distinct from the personality typology *labels* that have been added to the symbol in the last fifty years.⁶ The symbol itself was introduced to the western world in the early 1900s.⁷ Nine personality types were developed by secular psychologists and placed onto the symbol in the early 1970s.⁸ Then Catholics began using the symbol and its assigned personality types in their spiritual formation efforts, and two main Jesuit authors emerged to write on the Enneagram's use in churches and religious institutions. The personality typology was further developed into a detailed test to determine not only one's

Enneagram Journey to Healthy Relationships (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 186; Alice Fryling, *Mirror for the Soul: A Christian Guide to the Enneagram* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017). In *Road*, Cron and Stabile list Rohr first among their teachers in "Acknowledgements," 233; Rohr wrote the foreword for Heuertz's *Sacred*, and Heuertz included Rohr among those to whom he dedicated *Sacred*, 9-11; Stabile dedicated *Path* to her husband, children, grandchildren, and Rohr; and Rohr wrote a back-cover endorsement for Fryling's *Mirror*. Cron, Stabile, Heuertz, and Fryling each refer to Rohr extensively in their works.

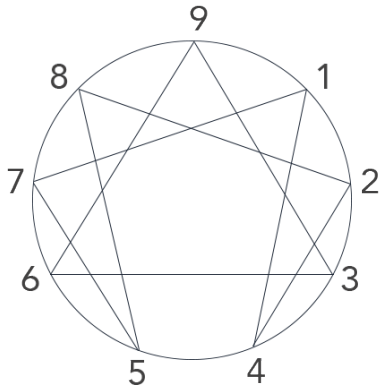
6 Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 19-20; Riso, *Personality*, 11-22; Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, xix; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 8-9.

7 Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 20; Riso, *Personality*, 19.

8 Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 20; Riso, *Personality*, 19; Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, xix.

personality type but also the motivations of each personality that leads to freedom from the associated passions and sins of each type.⁹

The Enneagram Symbol and Its Contested Origin



The term Enneagram comes from a combination of the Greek words *εννεα* meaning “nine” and *γραμμα* meaning “that which is written or drawn.”¹⁰ The Enneagram symbol, pictured below, consists of a circle with nine points located equidistant from each other on the circumference with the numeral 9 positioned at the highest point on the circle’s circumference. The other eight numerals, beginning with 1, are located sequentially clockwise from the 9. The inside of the circle consists of an equilateral triangle formed by internally connecting points 9, 3, and 6. The remaining six circumferential points are connected internally in the order determined by the mathematical quotient of the number 1 divided by 7, which is the series of numerals 1, 4, 2, 8, 5, and 7 in that distinct infinite order. Interestingly, any cardinal number divided by the number seven yields a quotient with a remainder consisting of those same six numbers in the same ongoing infinite sequence.¹¹ Explaining the *origin* of the Enneagram symbol, however, is not so exact or precise.

There is no general agreement on the source or date of origin of the Enneagram symbol, but possible dates of origin range from Babylonian times to as late as the sixteenth century.¹² Alice Fryling, a popular author on Christian application of the Enneagram, claimed that “We know that the Christian roots of the Enneagram probably go back to the desert mothers and fathers of the fourth century. They are often considered the “spiritual directors” or mentors of the early church. As people sought them out for help on the spiritual journey,

⁹ Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 19-20; Riso, *Personality*, 17.

¹⁰ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 5th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1956), 120.

¹¹ For example, 1 divided by 7 = 0.1428572142857142857.... The series of six numerals 142857 continues infinitely. This infinitely repeating sequence of numbers, referred to as a “repetend,” can be designated mathematically as 0.(142857). Similarly, 2 divided by 7 = 0.(285714), 3 divided by 7 = 0.(428571), and so on.

¹² Heuertz, 42-44; Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 19-20; Rohr, *Discovering*, 5.

these teachers saw patterns of life that are reflected in the Enneagram.”¹³ Despite Fryling’s assertion, most current experts credit the Sufi Muslims of Central Asia with developing the Enneagram symbol between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁴ Regardless of its origin, there is little dispute that the Enneagram *symbol* was introduced in the early 1900s to the Western world by George I. Gurdjieff, who became familiar with it while in Afghanistan.¹⁵ Gurdjieff used the Enneagram to teach his students mysterious “esoteric subjects,” which apparently did not include any psychological or personality typology.¹⁶ Instead, Gurdjieff developed a more universal understanding of the Enneagram and believed that it could be used “as an overlay to explain any evolved system, be it religion, science, or astrology.”¹⁷ Gurdjieff believed that “Everything can be included and read in the Enneagram.”¹⁸

Modern Psychological Typology Was Overlaid On the Enneagram Symbol

During the 1950’s and 1960’s, a Bolivian named Oscar Ichazo developed an application of the Enneagram symbol in relation to human personality and claimed to have learned it from Afghani Sufi masters *before* he came upon Gurdjieff’s writings.¹⁹ Ichazo’s work with the Enneagram symbol was included in a larger body of work on the human being as a whole, a teaching that he called “protoanalysis.”²⁰ His teaching was a mixture of methods aimed at achieving higher levels of consciousness and “full enlightenment” that included studying

¹³ Alice Fryling, *Mirror for the Soul: A Christian Guide to the Enneagram* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 8.

¹⁴ Jerome P. Wagner, and Ronald E. Walker. "Reliability and Validity Study of a Sufi Personality Typology: The Enneagram." *Journal Of Clinical Psychology* 39, no. 5 (1983): 712; Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert, *Discovering the Enneagram: An Ancient Tool for a New Spiritual Journey* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2018), 5-7; Heuertz, 44.

¹⁵ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 8; Heuertz, 47.

¹⁶ Cron and Stabile, 10; Albert Ellis, Lidia D. Abrams, and Mike Abrams, *Personality Theories: Critical Perspectives* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2009), 571; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 8-9; Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 20.

¹⁷ Heuertz, 45.

¹⁸ P.D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: The Teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff* (New York: Harvest Book, 2001), 294.

¹⁹ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 9.

²⁰ Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, 1-3; 156.

physical organs and systems of the human body, astrological signs, and mantras. Eventually, Ichazo characterized his nine psychological types as “ego fixations” in an effort to bring his labels more into agreement with the modern psychology of his day (see Appendix A).²¹

Claudio Naranjo, a Fulbright scholar and Gestalt psychiatrist, studied “protoanalysis” with Ichazo and brought it to the United States in the early 1970s.²² He wanted to utilize the term “protoanalysis” to describe his own work and teaching on personality typology, but because Ichazo had trademarked the term, Naranjo instead coined the term “Ennea-types.” In the 1960s, Naranjo worked with Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy, which is “an experiential therapy stressing awareness and integration [which] grew as a reaction against analytic therapy.”²³ Naranjo eventually combined Perls’s psychiatry with Ichazo’s “protoanalysis” and overlaid the nine Ennea-types onto the Enneagram symbol. Ichazo’s “protoanalysis” and Naranjo’s “Ennea-types” have combined with Perls’s Gestalt psychiatry to form the foundation for most modern Enneagram psychological profiling systems and tests.²⁴ These personality type designations on the Enneagram symbol, at least as starting points, are now treated as the *de facto* nine types.²⁵

Modern Efforts to Christianize the Enneagram

Claudio Naranjo began teaching the Ennea-types at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California in the early 1970s.²⁶ Among his students were several American Jesuit priests, including Reverend Robert Ochs, who began adapting his own hand-written notes on the Ennea-types to Catholic spiritual formation and counseling needs for seminarians and laypeople. Although Ochs never published his notes on the Ennea-types, he was instrumental in teaching this personality typology at Jesuit theological centers, at Loyola

²¹ Ellis, 571-72; Riso, *Personality*, 16; Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 22-24.

²² Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, xix.

²³ Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 8th ed. (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2009), 9; 198-227.

²⁴ Don Richard Riso, *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 17; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 9; Heuertz 47-48.

²⁵ Riso, 17; Riso and Hudson, 24.

²⁶ Ellis, 572; Riso, *Personality*, 17; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 9. The Esalen Institute is a non-profit founded in 1962. “Esalen is a major catalyst in the transformation of humankind, working with individuals and institutions to integrate body, mind, heart, spirit, and community in a nurturing relationship with the environment.” <https://www.esalen.org/page/our-mission-values>.

University in Chicago, and at the University of California at Berkeley.²⁷ By 1974, Enneagram materials used at Jesuit retreats were developed into one-page sketches of the nine different Enneagram personality types. And those pages became the foundational ideas of a Jesuit seminarian, Don Riso, and a Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr. Riso would go on to write the formative work *Personality Types* in 1987 and Rohr would write *Discovering the Enneagram* in 1989.²⁸ Both men and their works are considered seminal in the development of Enneagram books, seminars, and personality tests.²⁹ By the mid-1980s, numerous books had been written on the Enneagram from both a religious and psychological perspective.³⁰ Riso and Hudson worked to develop an Enneagram type questionnaire that would eventually become the Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI), which consists of 144 paired statements and requires about 40 minutes to complete.³¹

How the Enneagram is Used in Therapy and Counseling

Secular psychologists and therapists utilize the Enneagram as a tool to establish a reference point from which to move clients toward some type of conflict resolution. Most counselors who employ the Enneagram do so in Gestalt therapy fashion by emphasizing the client's self-awareness and motivation.³² The Enneagram has been largely discredited by the scientific community, and although the need for more empirical evidence of its usefulness has been acknowledged, none has been produced that is acceptable in the academic world.³³

²⁷ Heuertz, 48; Riso, *Personality*, 17; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 9.

²⁸ Riso, *Personality*, 16-17; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering the Enneagram* was first published as *Das Enneagramm: Die 9 Gesichter der Seele* in 1989 and translated into English in 1990.

²⁹ Cron, Stabile, Heuertz, and Fryling acknowledge Rohr, Riso, or both in their works on the Enneagram.

³⁰ See J. G. Bennett, *Enneagram Studies*, (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1983); Barbara Metz, and John Burchill, *The Enneagram and Prayer: Discovering Our True Selves Before God* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1987); Don Richard Riso, *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

³¹ The RHETI version 2.5 can be accessed online at <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/rheti/>

³² Thelma Duffey, and Shane Haberstroh, "Developmental Relational Counseling: Applications for Counseling Men," *Journal Of Counseling & Development* 92, no. 1 (2014): 108; Howard Winokuer, and Darcy Harris, *Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2012), 165.

³³ Gerald P. Koocher, Madeline R. McMann, Annika O. Stout, and John C. Norcross, "Discredited Assessment and Treatment Methods Used with Children and Adolescents: A Delphi Poll," *Journal of Clinical*

People are generally trained in the use of the Enneagram by reading books, attending seminars, watching videos, or taking some typology test based on the Ennea-types. The complexity of the tool itself makes it appealing to some, but most Enneagram authors admit to the common trap of people getting stuck on their number or label and never moving beyond it.³⁴

Determining a Person's Number, Wings, and Direction

The first step in utilizing the Enneagram typology is to determine a person's basic type, or their "number." According to Riso, every person emerges from childhood as one of nine main personality types that are numbered, labeled in a single word, and described further in three or four basic single-word character descriptors (Appendix A, columns 1 and 2).³⁵ Methods for determining what number a person is can be as simple as reading the nine type names and associated descriptors and then choosing the label that best fits one's self-perception. Or one can choose from the plethora of available online tests ranging in length from 2 questions to 144 questions.³⁶ Regardless of the method a person uses to identify his *basic* personality type, he must then take notice and become familiar with the two adjacent types, called "wings." For example, a number 5 must also understand the characteristics of its neighboring types 4 and 6. This is important, because each person must be aware that he is a unique mixture of his basic type and *at least* one, if not both, of his wings.³⁷

Once a person determines his basic number and wing(s), what he does with this information depends on the Enneagram author or teaching to which he subscribes. Riso

Child & Adolescent Psychology 44 (5) (2015): 725; Rebecca A. Newgent, Patricia E. Parr, Isadore Newman, and Kristin K. Higgins, "The Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator: Estimates of Reliability and Validity," *Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development* 36 (4) (2004): 235; R. Elliott Ingersoll, and David M. Zeidler. *Integral Psychotherapy: Inside Out/Outside In*, SUNY Series in Integral Theory (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 174-175; Ellis, 575.

³⁴ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 14; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 24. Rohr and Ebert are quick to point out the dangers of being pigeon-holed, but point to a need to "go deeper."

³⁵ Ellis, 574; Riso, *Personality*, 28.

³⁶ There are several online Enneagram tests available, some of which are free. The Riso-Hudson QUEST™ is a two-question test and is included in the book *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*; the RHETI™ is a 144-question test, currently priced at \$12, and available online at <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com>

³⁷ Riso, *Personality*, 15; Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 69-70; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 29-30; Cron and Stabile, 58. Rohr and Ebert maintain that both wings can complement a person's basic type, while Riso and Hudson hold that only one wing can. Heuertz remains neutral.

maintained that every person is moving towards another personality type as either psychological integration (health, self-actualization) or psychological deterioration (unhealthy, neurosis) takes place. The direction of integration is 9-3-6-9 for the Enneagram types located on the triangle points, and 1-7-5-8-2-4-1 for types located on the hexagram points. The direction for disintegration is reversed for both triangle points or hexagram points.³⁸ Some teachers and authors choose to use only personality type numbers while others assign short labels to each number. Still others assign “needs” to each personality type in an effort to help clients better understand themselves and those around them.³⁹

The Enneagram’s Use in Secular Therapy

The Enneagram is commonly used in secular psychology and therapy as a tool to facilitate the client’s development of self-awareness and other-awareness with the common goal of resolving some type of internal or external conflict.⁴⁰ In an effort to assist their clients in making cognitive and behavioral changes, counselors and therapists use the Enneagram to help patients develop a deeper understanding of their own personality type and those of others, with the goal of productive relational change.⁴¹ Because the dynamics of interpersonal conflicts include the personalities of all people involved, the Enneagram can help people constructively manage their own thinking and behavior, as well as understand how others perceive them when a misunderstanding occurs.⁴² Dr. Thelma Duffey, Professor of Counseling and Department Chair at the University of Texas at San Antonio stated about the Enneagram, that “It can help individuals increase their level of self-awareness and their understanding of others by discovering the motivations behind their behaviors.”⁴³ Karen Tapp, Associate Professor of Counseling, Social Work, and Leadership at Northern Kentucky

³⁸ Riso, 35-37; The Enneagram Institute®, founded by Riso and Hudson in 1997, offers more detailed explanations of these processes at <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/how-the-enneagram-system-works/>

³⁹ Heuertz, 35.

⁴⁰ Erin Kern Popejoy, Kristi Perryman, and Anthony Suarez. "Using the Enneagram to Facilitate Resolution of Supervisory Conflict." *Journal Of Counselor Practice* 8, no. 2 (2017): 136.

⁴¹ Karen Tapp, and Ken Engebretson, "Using the Enneagram for Client Insight and Transformation: A Type Eight Illustration," *Journal Of Creativity In Mental Health* 5, no. 1 (2010): 65.

⁴² Tapp, 67.

⁴³ Duffey, 108.

University, summarized her thoughts on what secular therapy can accomplish with the Enneagram tool:

Using the Enneagram during the therapeutic process can help mental health practitioners facilitate client insight and self-discovery. The system can help those in therapy use the Enneagram as a tool to gain insight into their personality. It provides clients and counselors a common language with which to discuss problems. More specifically, using the Enneagram can instruct clients on identifying how their own behavior and perceptions cause barriers to effective relationships and personal productivity. The system can be used to devise strategies to work more effectively with others and teach others to discern personality styles different from their own. For those seeking productive relational change, the Enneagram provides a source of insight and a tool for transformation.⁴⁴

Advocates argue that a wide range of possible Enneagram applications exist. Winouker claimed success with the Enneagram in the arena of grief counseling, using it as a tool to help guide clients in a way of grieving that is appropriate to their specific personality type.⁴⁵ Still another use in therapy is predictive in nature. In *Integral Recovery: A Revolutionary Approach to the Treatment of Alcoholism and Addiction*, John Dupuy claimed that in drug addiction recovery treatment, a patient's Enneagram type will influence how and why they began to use drugs, as well as which actual type of drug the patient is most likely to abuse.⁴⁶ Similarly, Jennifer Schneider, M.D., PhD, completed a study of sex addicts and claimed that certain Enneagram personality types are more prone to sexual addiction. This study also tracked addicts through recovery and claimed to accurately predict which types do better in recovery.⁴⁷

Since its introduction in the United States, the Enneagram's most consistent application has been in the area of organizational development as a tool for building effective teams and work environments. Richard Knowles developed the Process Enneagram[®] as a tool

⁴⁴ Tapp, 71.

⁴⁵ Winouker, 89-90.

⁴⁶ John Dupuy, *Integral Recovery: A Revolutionary Approach to the Treatment of Alcoholism and Addiction*, Excelsior Editions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 74. Dupuy concedes that more research is needed on making a definite connection between determining a client's personality type and choice of different types of drugs.

⁴⁷ Jennifer Schneider, and Brenda Schaeffer, "The Enneagram Typology: A Tool for Understanding and Counseling Sex Addicts," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 4 (3) (1997): 245-278.

to help organizations form effective teams for solving complex problems.⁴⁸ Stanford University School of Business, the U.S. Postal Service, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency have used the Enneagram among other applications as part of their management training, and there is ongoing research into its application in the arena of primary and secondary education. The research specifically targets increasing the effectiveness of teaching as a result of better teacher-student relationships.⁴⁹ The benefit in most Enneagram applications is relational improvement from participants' increased awareness of their own personality types and those of others.

In the academic arena, the Enneagram remains noticeably absent from the indexes and tables of contents of most psychotherapy or personality theory textbooks.⁵⁰ While author Albert Ellis did include the Enneagram in his textbook *Personality Theories: Critical Perspectives*, he grouped it with "Religious, New Age, and Traditional Approaches to Personality." Ellis proposed a correlation of Enneagram Types to DSM disorders along with Freudian and Jungian typologies (see Appendix A).⁵¹ Elliott Ingersoll, Chair and Professor of Counseling at Cleveland State University, stated that only two peer-reviewed journals have published studies on the Enneagram's reliability and validity.⁵² Those studies do not support use of the nine personality types, but note that the Enneagram "can be useful if the client is enthusiastic about it."⁵³ Most notably, in a recent study of thirty-six different mental health assessment tests utilized in child and adolescent psychiatry, the Enneagram tied for last place among all the tests that were evaluated.⁵⁴ The Enneagram was *the most* discredited of all the

⁴⁸ Richard N. Knowles, "Editorial: The Process Enneagram," *Emergence: Complexity & Organization* 15, no. 1 (2013): vii-viii; Catherine Taylor, "The Process Enneagram: A Practitioner's Guide to Its Use as a Facilitative Tool in the Corporate Environment," *Emergence: Complexity & Organization* 15, no. 1 (2013): 55.

⁴⁹ Andrew M. Bland, "The Enneagram: A Review of the Empirical and Transformational Literature," *Journal Of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development* 49, no. 1 (2010): 26-27.

⁵⁰ Bernardo J. Carducci, *The Psychology of Personality*, 2nd ed., (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009); Barbara Engler, *Personality Theories: An Introduction*, 8th ed., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009); Albert Ellis, *Personality Theories: Critical Perspectives*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009). Jess Feist, and Gregory J. Feist, *Theories of Personality* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

⁵¹ Ellis, 529-576.

⁵² Ingersoll and Zeitler, 174.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Gerald P. Koocher, Madeline R. McMann, Annika O. Stout, and John C. Norcross, "Discredited Assessment and Treatment Methods Used with Children and Adolescents: A Delphi Poll." *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology* 44 (5) (2015): 725.

psychological assessments tests that were evaluated.⁵⁵ Academics generally agree that more empirical analysis needs to be done to validate the use of Enneagram personality typologies as a legitimate tool.⁵⁶

Enneagram Acceptance and Rejection in Evangelical Churches

Evangelical pastors and writers are mixed on their views of whether or not to endorse and utilize the Enneagram in general or in specific ministries, including counseling. Several representative writers from widely read and influential sources are cited herein as indicative of current thinking in the evangelical community.

Author John Starke, a frequent contributor to *The Gospel Coalition*, wrote on the Enneagram in *Christianity Today* that

As a pastor in a confessional and evangelical tradition, I want the people I counsel and lead to trust in the sufficiency of Scripture, the power of the gospel, the regular graces of gathered worship, the preaching of God’s Word, and the Lord’s Supper for spiritual growth. Leaders who share my convictions have been suspicious of using tools like the Enneagram. Even still, I believe the Enneagram can enhance, not replace, our participation in the normal means of Christian grace and growth.⁵⁷

Like many other evangelical pastors, Starke confesses and teaches a doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, but he chooses to functionally endorse other extra-biblical means. However, endorsing and employing the Enneagram in ministry is different from referring to a lexicon, concordance, or commentary to better understand a difficult or obscure Bible passage. Starke went further in advocating the typology: “The Enneagram exposes to us where we need to come to Christ and seek transformation. In Christ, by the power of participation in his Spirit, we can experience healing of our fear, guilt, or shame. But also, in Christ is the power to imitate his virtues.”⁵⁸ Starke implied that the Enneagram enlightens Christians in areas where the Word cannot shine adequate light.

Joe Carter, a regular contributor to *The Gospel Coalition*, considered whether the Enneagram’s origin itself should rule out evangelical use, and wrote inconclusively that

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Newgent, Parr, Newman, and Higgins, 235; Ellis, 575; Ingersoll and Zeitler, 174-175.

⁵⁷ John Starke, "An Evangelical’s Guide to the Enneagram," *Christianity Today* 60, no. 9 (2016): 56.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 59.

Still, it raises the questions of whether we should be concerned because of the Enneagram's occultist origins. We definitely should be concerned when the Enneagram is being used, as many Catholics have, as a form of Gnostic-based numerology. We shouldn't be seeking divination from a tool that was developed by someone who claims it was handed to him in a vision from what sounds suspiciously like a demon. When the Enneagram is used simply as a diagnostic tool or for personality classification, the question becomes less clear. Despite its origin story, there may be enough of the Enneagram that remains useful (or at least non-harmful). If that's the case, we should leave the issue up to the conscience of the individual Christian.⁵⁹

Carter's neutral position left readers wondering, "Exactly *which* part(s) of the Enneagram are useful?" Or, to borrow Carter's own term, which parts of the Enneagram are "non-harmful" for Christians? Kevin DeYoung, in a blog critique of *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey of Self-Discovery* by Ian Cron and Suzanne Stabile, made clear his position about the dangers of using the Enneagram:

[M]ost importantly, the Enneagram presents an approach to spirituality that is alien to, and often at odds with, the language and contours of Scripture. Although Cron and Stabile argue that the Enneagram does not smuggle in the therapeutic under the guise of the theological (24), the book is awash in therapeutic language. Every chapter talks about some combination of forgiving myself, finding my true self, becoming spiritually evolved, being healed from wounded messages, dealing with codependent behaviors, and pursuing personal wholeness. This is not the language of the Bible. We hear nothing about fear of man, the love of the praise of man, covenantal promises, covenantal threats, repentance, atonement, heaven or hell. When faith is mentioned it's described as believing in something or someone bigger than you.⁶⁰

DeYoung contrasted the therapeutic language and process of change advanced by these Enneagram authors with the biblical language and process of sanctification. He pointed out specifically that "*The Road Back to You* has no doctrine of conversion, because

⁵⁹ Joe Carter, "The FAQs: What Christians Should Know About the Enneagram." *The Gospel Coalition*, August 8, 2018. Accessed October 17, 2018. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faqs-what-christians-should-know-about-the-enneagram/>.

⁶⁰ Kevin DeYoung, "Enneagram: The Road Back to You, Or to Somewhere Else?" *The Gospel Coalition: Kevin DeYoung Blog*, February 1, 2018. Accessed October 17, 2018. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/enneagram-road-back-somewhere-else/>

the human condition described has no need of regeneration.”⁶¹ DeYoung concluded his critique of Cron and Stabile by pointing out the danger of the Enneagram’s claim to “spiritual significance” – a claim that most other competing personality typologies do not make.⁶² This Enneagram claim of spiritual significance has contributed to this personality typology gaining popularity in evangelical churches and institutions.⁶³

Finally, John Houston, co-founder of the C. S. Lewis Institute and long-time Oxford Professor, crystallized the dilemma that many Christians face in deciding whether or not it is appropriate for them to use the Enneagram:

The apostles of the early church had strong views about the dangers of false teachers in their churches, as given in stern warnings in their epistles (1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1). Can evangelicals today, well meaning in their desire for more “spirituality,” become so naively eclectic in issues of the pursuit of contemporary spirituality? Since only truth stands the test of time, these syncretistic adoptions – such as the use of Jungian personality types or the application of the Enneagram – can divert undiscerning Christians with “tools” and “techniques,” instead of having a deeper biblical faith.⁶⁴

A brief survey of both Rohr’s theology and Riso’s theology – specifically their doctrines of God, man, Scripture, and sin – is a helpful starting point for evangelical Christians who are confused about the appropriateness of using the Enneagram in the church.

A Biblical Critique of Enneagram Personality Typology

Robert Ochs was the original Jesuit student of Naranjo’s Ennea-type teachings, and although he was a published writer, Ochs never published the Enneagram-related materials that he taught to others. Therefore, the seminal works of Richard Rohr and Don Riso, two of Ochs’ students, are referenced as primary representations of spiritual teaching that has

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Burgess, 19; Jonathan Merritt, “What is the ‘Enneagram,’ and why are Christians suddenly so enamored by it?” <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>, Sept. 5, 2017 (Accessed September 18, 2018).

64 James M. Houston, “The Future of Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 4 (2) (2011): 134.

influenced current Enneagram authors who are popular among evangelicals.⁶⁵ Rohr freely used Bible words like God, sin, repentance, and spirit throughout his Enneagram works, but scriptural references were used mainly to proof text various points that the author advanced.⁶⁶ Riso focused on a more general application of the Enneagram personality concepts. Riso promoted a type of spiritual wisdom associated with the Enneagram, and he eventually developed an Enneagram personality typology test. A brief theological consideration of Rohr's and Riso's doctrines of God, man, Scripture, and sin will be undertaken in light of the Enneagram's questionable history and vague spirituality.

Rohr's and Riso's Theology

Richard Rohr acknowledged in both his early Enneagram works that many Christians speak frequently about God, and also in the name of God, but are in fact living deceived lives as they pursue their own passions. He taught that, based on the foundational teachings of Jesuit founder Ignatius Loyola, the Enneagram can be used to help people in the “discernment of spirits” that effectively trap one's soul.⁶⁷ But Rohr made no mention of the Holy Spirit's role in this discernment of spirits. Instead, he proposed that the Enneagram itself can expose these “inner and outer voices and impulses that continually influence us.”⁶⁸ Rohr downplayed the holiness of God and man's need to fear God, claiming that Protestantism “has seen to it that people are afraid of God, instead of falling in love with God.”⁶⁹ For example, Rohr cited psychotherapist Tilman Moser's claim that the Protestant faith of his own childhood robbed him of his ability to feel right, become reconciled to himself, or find himself okay.⁷⁰ It is clear from reading Rohr that he advocated using the Enneagram to help man realize that, in spite of the passions or “sins” associated with each personality type, man is basically good. In his description of “gifted sinners,” Rohr

65 See Rohr, Riso, Cron, Stabile, Fryling, and Heuertz.

66 For example, Rohr referred to the Enneagram as a tool for “discernment of spirits” and cited 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world,” and 1 Thessalonians 5:21, “but test everything; hold fast what is good” for scriptural support. Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, xii; xvi; xix; xxii. All scriptural quotes herein are from the English Standard Version.

67 Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 11; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 21-22.

68 Ibid.

69 Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 121; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 136-137.

70 Tilmann Moser, *Gottesvergiftung* (Frankfurt, 1976), 15-38.

acknowledged man's "inner voice" that exposes both the negative and positive in man as it confirms to us that "You really love God and long for God. You are good. Stop butchering yourself so brutally. You are a daughter or son of God. You can feel compassion."⁷¹

Don Riso did not clearly state his concept of God in his first published work on the Enneagram. But his later work demonstrated the pantheistic underpinnings of his endorsed Enneagram system through his effort to clarify the difference between personality and "Essence," which he also called "Spirit."⁷² He stated that "In spiritual language we could say that within each person is an individual spark of the Divine."⁷³ Riso contended that the Enneagram is simply a tool to help man experience his Essence, which is dominated by his personality. According to Riso, when a person successfully acknowledges his personality type and moves in the healthy direction of integration, he frees himself from the detrimental effects of his personality.⁷⁴ Only then can man experience his Essence. Riso stated that when this awareness of personality and subsequent liberation occurs, "We become aware that we are part of a Divine Presence all around us *and in us* that is constantly and miraculously unfolding."⁷⁵ Riso presented a pantheistic picture of man being one with the omnipresent God, and he promoted the Enneagram types as the appropriate paths to reaching that God.

Richard Rohr's loose references to God demonstrated his failure to give Him, namely the Person of the Holy Spirit, pride of place in the process of true biblical heart change. Instead, Rohr venerated the man-made Enneagram symbol and process. He failed to acknowledge the holiness of the triune God of the Bible, instead relegating the force or energy of personal change to an "inner observer."⁷⁶ In *Discovering*, Rohr stated: "A biblical definition of the Holy Spirit is "*dynamis*," which means "power" or "strength."⁷⁷

But the Person and work of the Holy Spirit cannot be demoted to being Rohr's "fair witness" that helps man to let go of his negative inner voices on his way back to remembering his good "True Self."⁷⁸ Nor will the Helper, Riso's theology notwithstanding, be seconded to

⁷¹ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 18; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 29.

⁷² Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 27.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 20.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁸ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 20; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 28-29. See also Heuertz, 27, 248.

the role of man's spiritual guide as man remembers his individual spark of the Divine and wakes up to his good, true nature.⁷⁹ Both Rohr and Riso advocated a tool and process of temporal behavior change instead of the one eternal heart change found in Scripture.

The correct biblical picture is one of a Holy God redeeming worshippers by replacing their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh, installing His Spirit and writing His law onto their new hearts, and causing them to walk in obedience to His Word, all for the glory of his name (Eze 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Jer 31:33). Jay Adams, David Powlison, and Heath Lambert agreed and confirmed that effective, lasting heart change is a process that is enabled by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ The God of the Bible is good and holy, and He exists in a triune nature—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that is the most perfect, loving, conflict-free of *all* relationships. Christ is the perfect image of what God is conforming man to be, by the power and direction of His Spirit (Rom 8:28-29; 12:1-2; Col 3:7-8). Adams confirmed not only the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but also the role of each Person of the Godhead in man's salvation including the cooperative process of sanctification.⁸¹ Adams stated that, "Father, Son, and Spirit, then, all participate in man's salvation. Salvation was designed by the Father, effectuated by the Son and applied by the Spirit. Salvation is a trinitarian work."⁸²

Systematic theologians John Frame, Stanley Grenz, and Herman Bavinck have each maintained the full deity of the Holy Spirit as a core evangelical doctrine.⁸³ Frame appealed to Scripture's reference to the Spirit as "God" in Acts 5:3-4 when Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit as well as in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 when Paul wrote "that believers are the temple of God because the Spirit of God dwells in us."⁸⁴ Grenz confirmed that in the gospel of John 14:16-17 the promised figure was "another Counselor" (Greek: *allon parakleton*) that "implies a similarity between the Coming One and the Lord himself" to assist the apostles in their

⁷⁹ Riso and Hudson, 27.

⁸⁰ Jay Adams, *Theology for Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 233-248; Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 158-179; David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 26-29.

⁸¹ Adams, *Theology*, 176-177.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸³ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 471-473; 477-479; Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 70-78; 85-88; 469; 486-488; Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God: Instruction in the Christian Religion According to the Reformed Confession* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2020), 137; 139; 367.

⁸⁴ Frame, 472.

mission (see also Acts 1:8).⁸⁵ Bavinck confirmed the deity of the Spirit and stated that "the Holy Spirit is, together with the Son and the Father, the one, true God, and is to be eternally lauded and praised as such."⁸⁶

Rohr and Riso's Doctrine of Man

Richard Rohr maintained a dualistic nature of man but emphasized the spiritual aspect of man in support of the Enneagram's basic premise that change takes place in the person's soul. Enneagram author Christopher Heuertz, heavily influenced by Rohr, defined the objective of using the Enneagram as finding your "True Self," a term popularized by theologian Thomas Merton in the 1960s and used throughout Heuertz's first Enneagram book *The Sacred Enneagram*.⁸⁷ In *Sacred*, Heuertz defined "True Self" in his glossary as "The integrated authentic self. Who each person is created and called to be when the heart is centered and the mind is at peace. One's essence of Essential Self."⁸⁸

Don Riso held to a "sacred psychology" that endorsed the combined use of both psychology and spirituality, in the form of the Enneagram personality test, that shows man not so much who he is, but rather how he has limited himself from remembering who he is.⁸⁹ Riso developed the trademarked term for the Enneagram as "the bridge between psychology and spirituality[™]" and maintained that the Enneagram helps man remove the hindrances associated with his personality en route to remembering and rediscovering his true nature, or "Divine Essence."⁹⁰ Riso agreed with Rohr's view, as well as views "commonly accepted by psychologists," that man's personality is deterministic in nature.⁹¹ And Riso claimed that all people, being a product of childhood experiences and genetic factors, emerge from

85 Grenz, 477-478.

86 Bavinck, 139.

87 Thomas Merton, *The New Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1961), 117-118; Heuertz, 25; 27; 31-32; 39.

88 Heuertz, 248.

89 Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 27-30.

90 Ibid.

91 Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 15; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 26; Riso, 27. But Riso provides no citation of sources for the "commonly accepted" views that he references.

childhood as one of nine basic personality types.⁹² Riso affirmed a deterministic view of man and stated that “people do not change from one basic personality type to another.”⁹³

The Bible teaches that man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) to live in worshipful obedience to His Word as he exercised the stewarded dominion that God had given to him (Gen 1:28-30; 2:15). But man rebelled against his Holy Creator (Gen 3:1-8), and the resulting consequences were devastating. Most notably, man’s ability to fully image God became tainted and broken (Gen 3:8-24). But in the midst of man’s despair, God provided man the hope of reconciliation to Himself. Heath Lambert proposed that the facilitation of this promised restoration of man to God is the very goal of biblical counseling.⁹⁴ And Jay Adams contended that God’s saving grace is intended to lift man beyond his original state.⁹⁵ In the midst of his exhortation to readers for the development of a “serious attempt to systematize biblical data on personality,” Adams made two simple, yet profound statements that refute both Rohr’s and Riso’s deterministic views on personality types. First, Adams confirmed that “The Bible everywhere looks on personality as *fluid*. No one is “stuck” at any point in his life with a certain personality.”⁹⁶ Corollary to his first point, Adams confirmed that “counselors very definitely can help counselees to effect personality change” and cited the Ephesians model of progressive sanctification as the means to do so (Eph 4:17-5:5).⁹⁷ David Powlison agreed with Adams and Lambert that man *can* change and man *must* change.⁹⁸ According to Powlison, the final one of his five factors of sanctification is simply that “you change,” and he cited a scriptural and purposeful type of change that results in serving God, and *not* serving self: “You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess 1:9).⁹⁹ It is God’s design for man to turn from sin in repentance to a holy God.

92 Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 15; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 26; Riso, 27.

93 Riso, *Personality*, 27-28.

94 Lambert, 190.

95 Adams, 175.

96 Adams, 251.

97 *Ibid.*

98 Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?*, 61-69.

99 *Ibid.*, 67.

Rohr and Riso's Enneagram Doctrine of Sin

Richard Rohr used the term sin throughout his writings and teachings. His version of sin connected every man to a single God-given “gift” that was labeled on one of nine points on the Enneagram. Rohr maintained that each man’s gift is often sinfully abused when taken to extremes, and he labeled such extremes as obsessions.¹⁰⁰ Betraying a Jungian influence, he claimed that “the Enneagram shows us, among other things, the *dark side* of our gifts,” and affirmed that “Our gift and our sin are two sides of the same coin.”¹⁰¹ Rohr claimed that God, who has given each of us one of nine gifts illustrated on the Enneagram, makes use of our sins. He contended that accepting one’s gift from God is imperative to seeing one’s sin, and Rohr added that man must accept his big sin in order to realize how gifted he actually is.¹⁰² According to Rohr, that’s why it is so important for every person to determine which Enneagram number they are and then see and accept their one big sin.¹⁰³ The most practical components of Father Rohr’s analysis of each personality type are what he labeled “dilemma” and “conversion and redemption.”¹⁰⁴ He eventually defined sin as “a separation or failure to reach a goal.”¹⁰⁵ Suzanne Stabile, co-author of *The Road Back to You* with Ian Morgan Cron, was personally mentored and trained on the Enneagram by Rohr. She agreed with Rohr that one “deadly sin” exists for each personality type and concluded that one of the goals of the Enneagram is “Learning how to manage your deadly sin rather than allowing it to manage you.”¹⁰⁶ Rohr and Ebert characterized “original sin” as “We have abandoned our soul, our “soul child,” for a false identity that is defended and deceitful, and so we are trapped.”¹⁰⁷

In contrast to Rohr, Riso made a conscious decision to emphasize and develop the “healthy” traits of each psychological type in first book on the Enneagram, and this perhaps explains the absence of his formal treatment of sin. His later work with Hudson focused more on developing wisdom along a path to spiritual growth, therefore necessitating an

¹⁰⁰ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 14-22; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 24-32.

¹⁰¹ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 16; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 27.

¹⁰² Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 18; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 28.

¹⁰³ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 21; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 183; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 201.

¹⁰⁶ Cron and Stabile, 30-31.

¹⁰⁷ Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 45.

acknowledgment of the existence of sin to some degree. Riso and Hudson's treatment of sin was an adoption of the prior work of Ichazo and Naranjo, maintaining that the nine deadly sins, also called "passions," were human distortions of corresponding divine attributes. Consistent with their process of identifying and addressing healthy and unhealthy directions in humans, they clarified their concept of sin as follows: "The idea of the Deadly Sins (also called the 'Passions') is best understood if we think of the word sin not as something bad or evil, but as the tendency to 'miss the mark' in some way."¹⁰⁸ Both Rohr and Riso eventually accepted and adopted Ichazo's and Naranjo's secularized concept and associated labels for sin.¹⁰⁹

But contrary to Rohr, Riso, and the Enneagram authors that they have influenced, evangelical systematic theologians and biblical counseling authors in no way affirmed, intimated, or associated any positive characteristic with sin. Theologian Millard Erickson claimed that the doctrine of sin is important because it affects all other biblical doctrines, and therefore cannot be sidestepped.¹¹⁰ Wayne Grudem characterized man's ongoing sinful dilemma when he described the sanctification process as "a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more *free from sin* and like Christ in our actual lives."¹¹¹ Grudem provided a picture of man's need to break from the ruling power of sin not only at the point of regeneration, but also throughout the ongoing sanctification process. Consistent with Erickson and Grudem, Owen Strachan maintained that God's standard for man is perfection. He juxtaposed man's sinfulness with God's holiness and confirmed that "God does not judge us according to our behavior. He judges us according to his standard. His standard is perfect. It is absolute holiness at all times and in all situations."¹¹² While Strachan did acknowledge sin as both nature and acts, his emphasis on nature is hard to miss. Man's depravity stands in clear opposition to God's holiness.

Both Jay Adams and Heath Lambert leaned heavily on the doctrine of fallen man in need of redemption as a basis for all biblical counseling.¹¹³ Adams connected the doctrine of sin tightly with the very nature of man. He designated one of four parts of his own Doctrine

¹⁰⁸ Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 22-24.

¹⁰⁹ Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 23; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 183.

¹¹⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 513-515.

¹¹¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 746-748.

¹¹² Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2019), 90.

¹¹³ Adams, 94-159; Lambert, 214-246

of Man as “Counseling and Human Sin.”¹¹⁴ Adams referred to sin as “any failure to do what God requires or any transgression of what He forbids. It is doing what God says don’t do or not doing what He says to do. Sin, therefore, is “lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Sin is disobedience to God.”¹¹⁵ In confirming both the reality of sin and man’s subsequent fallen nature, John Frame added that “Of course, following the fall, none of us is good as we will see (Isa 64:6; Rom 3:23). We can become good only by union with Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.”¹¹⁶ Frame pressed the point that sin is specific disobedience to the commands of God’s Word, and wrote

The normative definition of sin (“sin is lawlessness,” 1 John 3:4) is often prominent in Scripture, especially since the first sin was disobedience to a specific divine command. That needs to be emphasized today especially, when even the church seems to have distaste for keeping authoritative commands. All of Scripture calls for us to obey God. Indeed, all of Scripture functions as command, because it is the Word of God.¹¹⁷

These theologians affirmed that Scripture attests to the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, and the means by which man can be reconciled to his Creator. But Scripture also establishes and maintains the standard by which all men will be judged.

Rohr and Riso’s Doctrine of Scripture

In his section “Jesus and the Enneagram” of *Discovering the Enneagram*, Richard Rohr tried to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is connected to each of the nine Enneagram types. As he walked through each of the nine types, Rohr utilized Scripture passages to proof text behavioral extremes that each personality type has adopted. For example, in his discussion of the negative traits of “Ones,” the “Reformers” (see Appendix A, columns 1 and 2) who are in constant pursuit of perfection in themselves and others, Rohr made reference to Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount, in the context of perfection. He then paraphrased Robert Short, *The Gospel According to Peanuts*, saying that a “key paradox of the Gospels is that we become perfect by accepting our own imperfection. We must recognize that [our

¹¹⁴ Adams, 139-159.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 146-147.

¹¹⁶ Frame, 845, footnote 1.

¹¹⁷ Frame, 849-850.

imperfection] is a part of the process of growth, that we make many mistakes.”¹¹⁸ Rohr misplaced an emphasis on human perfection in the midst of the passage’s larger theme of repentance and forgiveness. In a similar evaluation of “Sixes,” the “Loyalists” who have the need for security or certainty, Rohr used Luke 4:16 as a reference to Jesus’ “inner authority” that freed Him to “obey laws, rules, and traditions, as long as they weren’t taken to be the “real thing.”¹¹⁹ Using the story of Jesus’ return to the Nazareth synagogue, and subsequent reading of the Isaiah scroll, Rohr was proof texting Jesus’ own willingness to keep rules in his humanity—a behavior familiar to “Sixes.” This provides another example, of many throughout his works, where Rohr missed the bigger point—in this case Jesus’ confirmation of Himself as the Messiah prophesied in Isaiah.¹²⁰

After first writing *Personality Types*, Don Riso later co-authored *The Wisdom of the Enneagram* with Russ Hudson. But there was no reference or underpinning to Scripture in either work. In fact, Riso elevated the Enneagram symbol and typological system as an ancient, time-proven source of wisdom in itself, perpetuating the myth of its mystical origins and helping to maintain its venerated and authoritative position.

But Holy Scripture demands its rightful place of authority as the Creator’s Word, and it must be held high above the human wisdom of created man. Absolute truth, if it indeed exists, must come from an authoritative source. The Creator God spoke all things from nothing into creation (Gen 1:1-31), and He has spoken to His creation through His Word. Lambert clearly explained that the characteristic of scriptural authority “means that the Bible is our supreme standard for what we should believe and how we should behave because it comes from God, who cannot lie.”¹²¹ David Powlison and Jay Adams both confirmed the undeniable and necessary link between the Holy Spirit and His Word as being foundational to the process of progressive sanctification in a Christian’s life.¹²² Adams summarized the hope of God-honoring change available to Christians through counseling that relies on the work of the Holy Spirit in step with His Word:

¹¹⁸ Rohr, *Discovering*, 214; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 234. Rohr cited Robert L. Short, *The Gospel According to Peanuts* (New York, 1958), 15-16.

¹¹⁹ Rohr, *Discovering*, 220; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 240.

¹²⁰ See Luke 4:18-28 and Isaiah 61:1-2 for the complete story and prophecy.

¹²¹ Lambert, 36.

¹²² Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?*, 48-49; Adams, *Theology*, 177.

When doing true counseling – i.e., working with saved persons to enable them to make changes, at a level of depth that pleases God – it is possible to solve any true counseling problem (i.e., any problem involving love for God and one’s neighbor). Such assurance stems from the fact that all the resources necessary for change are available in the Word and by the Spirit.¹²³

In John MacArthur’s *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, David Powlison recounted and affirmed seven core elements of biblical counseling that Jay Adams had “rediscovered, articulated, and defended” since the 1970s.¹²⁴ Powlison stated that “The biblical change process which counseling must aim at is progressive sanctification” and then confirmed that “Counseling is the private ministry of the Word of God.”¹²⁵ A focus on Scripture is required in order for biblical heart change to occur. Biblical counseling takes place through the ministry of the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit of God.¹²⁶

Systematic theologians Erickson and Grudem concurred on the importance of recognizing the Bible as the authority that it claims to be, and they also warned that man’s disbelief in God’s Word is an indictment of disobedience to God himself.¹²⁷ Stanley Grenz confirmed the connection between the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word. Grenz stated, that “Because the Bible is the Spirit’s book, its purpose is instrumental to his mission. For this reason, we construct our doctrine of the Bible within the context of pneumatology, treating the Spirit’s activity in Scripture as one dimension of his overall mission.”¹²⁸ John Frame connected the work of the Holy Spirit – God Himself – with the sufficiency of Scripture. Frame wrote, that “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contains all the divine words that we will ever need for any area of life. Sufficiency in this sense, however, does not deny that the work of the Spirit is also necessary.”¹²⁹ Biblical heart change is both linked to and directly dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God ministering the Word of God.

¹²³ Adams, *Theology*, 177.

¹²⁴ David Powlison, “Biblical Counseling in Recent Times, in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 27-29

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

¹²⁷ Grudem, 81; Erickson, 212-215.

¹²⁸ Grenz, 495.

¹²⁹ Frame, 679.

Conclusion

It is unlikely that philosopher and theologian Francis Schaeffer ever met Oscar Ichazo or Claudio Naranjo. It is doubtful that Schaeffer ever read their work on Ennea-types. But back in 1968, Schaeffer characterized the essence of the Enneagram personality typology that has now become popular in many churches.¹³⁰ Schaeffer's quoted characterization fits amazingly well with the theology embedded in the Enneagram symbol and typology: "To the new theology, the usefulness of a symbol is in direct proportion to its obscurity. There is connotation, as in the word god, but there is no definition. The secret of the strength of neo-orthodoxy is that these religious symbols with a connotation of personality give an illusion of meaning."¹³¹ Much of what readers encounter in Enneagram authors Richard Rohr and Don Riso are misused, misquoted, or co-opted words that would be labeled by Francis Schaeffer as a characteristic component of the "new theology" that he called "semantic mysticism."¹³²

A mysterious teacher of esoteric subjects named G.I. Gurdjieff brought the Enneagram symbol to the western world in the early 1900s, and seven decades later a Gestalt psychiatrist named Claudio Naranjo mapped nine personality types to the nine points on the Enneagram symbol. Soon after, American Jesuits, including Richard Rohr and Don Riso, adopted the combination of the symbol and personality types, and the Enneagram was effectively endorsed as an esoteric tool for spiritual development.¹³³ In spite of being largely discredited by both the academics and practitioners of secular psychology and psychiatry, the Enneagram has gained popularity in evangelical churches, perhaps due to the recent historical success of attaching a type of spirituality to it. But the spirituality assigned to the Enneagram is not based on a biblical view of God, man, sin, and Scripture itself. And therein lies the Enneagram's most significant danger.

Based on a biblical critique of the influential works of Rohr and Riso, along with the Enneagram authors that they have influenced, the Enneagram personality typology should be rejected by evangelical churches. An evaluation of the early writings of Rohr and Riso exposed their misuse of Scripture to cloak their ideas in spiritual language. A biblical critique

¹³⁰ Merritt, "What is the 'Enneagram,' and why are Christians suddenly so Enamored by it?" <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>, Sept. 5, 2017 (Accessed September 18, 2018).

¹³¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 60.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 60-70.

¹³³ Merritt, "What is the 'Enneagram,' and why are Christians suddenly so Enamored by it?" <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>, Sept. 5, 2017 (Accessed September 18, 2018).

also revealed their functional relegation of the Holy Spirit's role as the "inner observer" that wakes man up to his own inherent goodness. Scripture instead has confirmed the full deity and Personhood of the Holy Spirit. Rohr and Riso saw man as basically good and maintained that man need only to acknowledge his predominant passions or "sins" on his way to remembering his True Self. But Scripture bears witness to the holiness of God and to the sinfulness of man. Rohr, Riso, and the Enneagram authors that they influenced elevated the man-made Enneagram symbol and process to be an authority unto itself. This perspective of authority conflicts with what the Savior Himself confirmed in John 17:17: That progressive sanctification – the biblical form of human change – takes place by the application of the truth of God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Appendix A: The Nine Enneagram Personality Types and Typologies¹³⁴

<u>Enneagram Type</u>	<u>Basic Characteristics</u>	<u>DSM-IV Categories</u>	<u>Freud's Typology</u>	<u>Jung's Typology</u>
<u>1. Reformers</u>	<u>Principled, perfectionistic, orderly</u>	<u>Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder</u>	<u>Anal retentive</u>	<u>Extraverted thinking type</u>
<u>2. Helpers</u>	<u>Caring, manipulative, possessive</u>	<u>Histrionic personality disorder</u>	<u>Anal expulsive</u>	<u>Extraverted feeling type</u>
<u>3. Status Seekers</u>	<u>Narcissistic, hostile, self-confident</u>	<u>Narcissistic personality disorder</u>	<u>Phallic receptive</u>	<u>No corresponding Jungian type</u>
<u>4. Artists</u>	<u>Creative, intuitive, tendency toward depression</u>	<u>Avoidant personality disorder</u>	<u>Oral retentive</u>	<u>Introverted intuitive type</u>
<u>5. Thinkers</u>	<u>Perceptive, analytic, eccentric</u>	<u>Corresponds partly to paranoid and partly to schizotypal personality disorder</u>	<u>Oral expulsive</u>	<u>Introverted thinking type</u>
<u>6. Loyalists</u>	<u>Dutiful, dependent, self-sacrificing</u>	<u>Dependent personality disorder</u>	<u>Anal receptive</u>	<u>Introverted feeling type</u>
<u>7. Generalists</u>	<u>Accomplished, impulsive, tends to be manic</u>	<u>Histrionic personality disorder with manic features</u>	<u>Phallic retentive</u>	<u>Extraverted sensation type</u>
<u>8. Leaders</u>	<u>Forceful, combative, self-assured</u>	<u>Antisocial personality disorder</u>	<u>Phallic expulsive</u>	<u>Extraverted intuitive type</u>
<u>9. Peacemakers</u>	<u>Reassuring, passive, neglectful</u>	<u>Dependent personality disorder</u>	<u>Oral receptive</u>	<u>Introverted sensation type</u>

¹³⁴ Ellis, Table 17.4, 574, based on Riso, 1987.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and the Affections: A Disqualifying

Deficiency

Nate Brooks¹

Part One

Four million copies of *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* by David D. Burns have been sold since its initial publication in 1980. The cheery yellow cover promises that the therapy within offers “clinically proven drug-free treatment for depression.”² Psychology Today ranked *Feeling Good* as the most used self-help counseling book tried by clients and another outcome study indicated that reading *Feeling Good* could be as effective as standard care for depression.³ Burns’ work helped popularize second-wave cognitive behavioral therapy in American culture.⁴

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) as a term may refer to a wide number of therapeutic interventions.⁵ Second-wave CBT is headlined by the work of Albert Ellis (rational-emotive behavior therapy), Donald Meichenbaum (cognitive-behavioral modification), and Aaron T. Beck (cognitive therapy), who each developed theories centered on the concept that psychological distress and maladaptive behavior are produced by irrational or defective thinking. While differences exist between the three systems, all

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² David Burns, *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*, reprint ed., (New York: Harper, 2012), front cover.

³ Temma Ehrenfeld, “Self-Help Books that Work,” Psychology Today, Accessed March 8, 2018, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/open-gently/201511/self-help-books-work>. See also E. V. Naylor, D. O. Antonuccio, M. Litt, et al., “Bibliotherapy as a Treatment for Depression in Primary Care,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings* 17 no. 3 (2010): 258-271.

⁴ Beck positively comments on *Feeling Good* in a 1988 interview, “It was intended for the lay reader. It provides a clear exposition of cognitive principles. It is a little to enthusiastic about the power of cognitive therapy but has helped a large number of people.” (Stephen Weinrach, “Cognitive Therapist: A Dialogue with Aaron Beck,” *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 67 [1988]: 163.) Additionally, Beck wrote the preface to the mass-market 2009 reprint. (Burns, *Feeling Good*, xi-xiii.)

⁵ Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Proposal* 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 204. Within this article, CBT refers to second-wave therapies pioneered by Ellis, Beck, and Meichenbaum.

share this core assumption.⁶ This article will focus on Beck's variant of CBT as his schema has attracted the most attention and been subjected to the greatest amount of empirical research.⁷ However, the overall critiques of Beck's approach are equally applicable to other forms of second-wave CBT given their equivalent ideological cores.

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the mechanism of change within Aaron T. Beck's cognitive theory (CT) in light of biblical teaching on transformation. It will be argued that CT is disqualified as a potential model of biblical change due to its lack of engagement with the affections in the process of transformation. This will be demonstrated in three movements. First, Beck's cognitive theory and cognitive therapy will be shown to center around the cognitive and behavioral functions. Second, a biblical portrait of the affections as critical to human transformation will be developed. Third, a biblical model of transformation will be proposed that is based upon the cognitive, volitional, and affective functions of the heart.

Cognitive Theory

Cognitive theory serves as the philosophical framework upon which cognitive therapy is built.⁸ While this paper focuses upon the mechanism of change within cognitive therapy, a general grasp of cognitive theory must precede any effective evaluation. Beck's cognitive theory and therapy function as a unit and are thus inseparably tied to one another.

Cognitive theory is based around a simple organizing premise: maladaptive behaviors are based upon maladaptive thinking.⁹ Judith Beck makes clear the sweeping range of this

⁶ Ibid, 202-204. Beck viewed Ellis' theory (REBT) as similar to his own. "The similarity ... is a fundamental commitment to the notion that the way people interpret situations will determine their emotional reactions." He also identifies crossover in the areas of automatic thoughts and cognitive restructuring. The primary difference Beck sees between his theory and REBT is that REBT has one intervention strategy for all problems, while CT has developed different intervention strategies for different disorders (Weinrach, "Cognitive Therapist," 162).

⁷ Kimberly A. Dines, Susan Torres-Harding, Mark A. Reinecke, Arthur Freeman, Ann Sauer, "Cognitive Therapy" in *Essential Psychotherapies: Theory and Practice* ed. Stanley B. Messer and Alan S. Gurman, 3rd ed., 163-164. In fact, CBT has been so thoroughly studied, that meta-analyses are not longer being used to demonstrate efficacy but rather meta-analyses of meta-analyses. (Andrew C. Butler, Jason E. Chapman, Evan M. Forman, Aaron T. Beck, "The empirical status of cognitive-behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses," *Clinical Psychology Review*, 26, no. 1, 2006). See also Burns, *Feeling Good*, xii, 11.

⁸ "Cognitive therapy" and "cognitive behavioral therapy" identify identical therapies in this paper. Beck preferred "cognitive therapy," though his system is often referred to as "cognitive-behavioral therapy."

⁹ Dienes, Torres-Harding, Reinecke, Freeman, and Sauer, "Cognitive Therapy," 148; Judith Beck, *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Basics and Beyond* (New York: Gulliford Press, 1995), 1; Aaron T. Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*, (New York: Penguin, 1976), 3; Burns, *Feeling Good*, 12-14.

statement, “[T]he cognitive model proposes that distorted or dysfunctional thinking (which influences the patient’s mood and behavior) is common to all psychological disturbances.”¹⁰ While Beck originally developed the cognitive model to address depression, its successful application to an expansive number of psychological disorders gives Judith Beck the authorization to use the word “all.”

In 2014, Aaron Beck and Haigh published an important paper in the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* that sought to clarify and define a generic cognitive model for use across a spectrum of psychopathologies.¹¹ They describe the generic cognitive model as an advance in cognitive therapy as it consists of principles common to the treatment of a variety of psychological problems.¹² The cognitive model presented in the article may be considered the definitive distillation of cognitive theory, as it reflects the refinement of 50 years of clinical testing.

Cognitive theory takes pains to detail the process of human thought and response given its focus on cognition as the origin point of psychological disturbances. Human beings cease functioning normally in response to internal and external stimuli because of “faulty information processing.”¹³ Understanding the information processing model of cognitive therapy is therefore critical to understanding the therapeutic interventions of CBT.

Human thinking occurs on two levels that interact with one another. Beck labels the initial system the “automatic processing system.” This system is responsible for immediate responses to external and internal stimuli. As the initial response system, the automatic processing system is rather crude in its sophistication. It is triggered by “events that signal personal threats, gains, or losses.”¹⁴ Information is sorted into basic categories, and the automatic processing system often makes mistakes due to its immediate response time.¹⁵

The “reflective processing system” stands behind the automatic processing system and works to refine and evaluate judgments. This system has the function of smoothing out many of the rough edges. It works to evaluate and identify incorrectly labeled stimuli.¹⁶

¹⁰ Judith Beck, *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, 1.

¹¹ Aaron T. Beck and Haigh, Emily A. P., “Advances in Cognitive Theory and Therapy: The Generic Cognitive Model,” *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 10 no. 1 (2014): 1-24.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ An example of this can be seen in a war veteran who dives to the ground when a door slams. His automatic processing system sorted the external stimuli of the banging door into “danger,” which then compelled an immediate action of ducking for cover. Not all improper sortings have this level of physical response, however. A woman who is passed over for a promotion perceives this as “I am a failure.” She may have been qualified, but was exceeded by another qualified candidate who possessed seniority. In this case, the automatic processing system has incorrectly identified an internal thought, hence the cognitive distortion.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

These two systems are governed by an individual's beliefs. Beck defines the term "belief" as "a proxy for a cluster of expectancies, evaluations, memories, and images that form the content of cognitive schemas."¹⁷ As the automatic and reflective processing systems receive data, beliefs assign meaning to the incoming stimuli. Consequently, the most important aspect of human thinking in Beck's system is not the stimuli themselves, but the beliefs that govern their interpretation. Different individuals may respond very differently to similar events. Beliefs are subdivided into intermediate beliefs and core beliefs, the importance of which will be discussed later in this paper.¹⁸

Data that has been sorted by beliefs leads to particular behavioral responses. Neither the stimuli nor the beliefs in isolation from one another cause the response. Rather, the connection of a particular stimuli processed in a particular manner according to a held belief leads to certain behavior. Any maladaptive behavior can therefore be traced back to an incorrectly held belief.¹⁹ The below chart graphically illustrates this progression.

Stimuli → Processing according to belief → Behavioral

A core assumption of Beck's theory is that events themselves do not cause human suffering, but rather an individual's interpretation of those events.²⁰ This concept is not of Beck's invention, but rather carries a long legacy back to the Greek Stoics (and certainly earlier). Beck was fond of quoting Epictetus as saying "Men are not moved by things but the views which they take of them."²¹ Consequently, the solution does not lie in changing external circumstances, but rather in changing an individual's interpretation of their life situation.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive therapy is built upon this theoretical foundation. In order to produce change, cognitive therapy targets maladaptive cognitions to reduce or eliminate an individual's psychological distress. The therapy itself is based around three poles: cognitive

¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁸ Judith Beck, *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, 16, 137-165.

¹⁹ This is similar to Ellis. However, while Ellis wrote a list of irrational beliefs, Beck did not. Beck thought it to be a point of hubris to say what beliefs are irrational (Weinrach, "Cognitive Therapist," 162).

²⁰ Weinrach, "Cognitive Therapist," 159; Burns, *Feeling Good*, xviii; Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*, 47-75.

²¹ Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*, 47. Beck credits Ellis with introducing him to Epictetus in particular (Sidney Bloch, "A pioneer in psychotherapy research: Aaron Beck," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 38 [2004]: 864.)

restructuring, focus interventions, and behavioral interventions.²² All three of these elements serve to change and reinforce an individual's interpretation of life events.

Cognitive restructuring serves as the center of CT. The first step in helping an individual restructure their cognitions is to identify their emotions. Emotions serve as markers of underlying thoughts that must be restructured. The cognitive-behavioral therapist does not consider all negative emotions to be bad, but rather focuses on negative emotions that arise from misinterpreting situations.²³ This step of therapy can be challenging because clients often do not discriminate between their emotions and their thinking. By helping clients separate feeling from thought, the therapist can move towards restructuring thoughts that create distress.²⁴

The second step towards cognitive restructuring involves evaluating automatic thoughts. Automatic thoughts are not experienced only by those in psychological distress; rather they are part of normal human experience.²⁵ Automatic thoughts are those thoughts that arise instantly to a given stimuli without willful desire on the part of the thinker.²⁶ Many automatic thoughts are correct (recall the automatic processing system discussed above), but others are distorted. Distorted thoughts come in one of two varieties. Some thoughts are contrary to fact.²⁷ Others are factual, but the conclusion based upon the fact is invalid.²⁸

Cognitive therapy aims to challenge both kinds of maladaptive interpretations through the modification of intermediate beliefs. Intermediate beliefs are those beliefs which are based upon attitudes, rules, and assumptions and are developed through cultural expectations and personal experiences. Automatic thoughts spring from intermediate beliefs and therefore changing maladaptive intermediate beliefs is critical to alleviating psychological distress.²⁹

²² Beck and Haigh, "Advances in Cognitive Theory and Therapy," 16-17.

²³ Beck, *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, 95. If an individual was to be gleeful over suffering, this would be an example of positive feeling that is a maladaptive thought.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 76. An example being, "I'm so stupid" when a bad test score is seen. See Dienes, Torres-Harding, Reinecke, Freeman, and Sauer, "Cognitive Therapy", 173-178 for a case study that unpacks how to address automatic thoughts.

²⁷ An example may be found in anorexia nervosa. A young girl thinks "if I eat one bite of casserole, I will get fat" even though this is clearly not the case."

²⁸ For example, "It will take me all night to complete this paper, *and therefore I am clearly not intelligent.*"

²⁹ Beck, *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, 142-143.

Client and therapist collaborate to establish a more “functional” belief than the currently held intermediate belief.³⁰ The below graph identifies sample maladaptive beliefs and “functional” new beliefs that the therapist and client have collaboratively identified.³¹

Sally’s old beliefs	More Functional Beliefs
If I don’t do as well as others, I’m a failure	If I don’t do as well as others, I’m not a failure, just human.
If I ask for help, it’s a sign of weakness	If I ask for help when I need it, I’m showing good problem-solving abilities (which is a sign of strength).
I should always work hard and do my best.	I should put in a reasonable amount of effort much of the time.

Intermediate beliefs are not changed by quickly accepting the new proposition and then moving forward. Intermediate beliefs are stubborn and focused effort is required to change them (hence the adaptation of behavioral elements in therapy).

There is no one particular method by which intermediate beliefs are to be changed. Rather, the therapist and client collaboratively determine strategies for reducing the strength of the old, rejected belief and reinforcing the new belief. These strategies vary substantially based upon the psychopathology being considered.³² Intermediate beliefs are directly seen in automatic responses as they dictate the way in which stimuli are interpreted. Thus by changing intermediate beliefs, patients will experience relief from their psychological distress by creating an evaluative grid by which stimuli are sorted.

The final level of therapy involves the most challenging kind of transformation, modifying core beliefs. Core beliefs are a product of childhood experiences and are “usually

³⁰ Ibid., 150.

³¹ Partial graph, replicated from Ibid, 151.

³² Exposure therapy is recommended for phobias (Resham Gellaty and Aaron T. Beck, “Catastrophic Thinking: A Transdiagnostic Process Across Psychiatric Disorders,” *Cog Ther Res* 40 [2016]: 447). Schizophrenia is treated by reviewing dysfunctional thought records, adhering to activity schedules that reinforce pleasurable activities, and using behavioral experiments to test hallucinations.

(Aaron T. Beck and Neil A. Rector, “Cognitive Therapy of Schizophrenia: A New Therapy for the New Millenium,” *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 54 no. 3 [2000]: 296). Standard cognitive restructuring is suggested for Borderline Personality Disorder (Amy Wenzel, Jason E. Chapman, Cory F. Newman, Aaron T. Beck, and Gregory K. Brown, “Hypothesized Mechanisms of Change in Cognitive Therapy for Borderline Personality Disorder,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62 no. 4 [2006]: 505-509). The variegated responses differentiate Beck’s CBT from Ellis’ REBT, as Ellis generally applied one form of intervention for all psychological problems.

global, overgeneralized, and absolute.”³³ These negative core beliefs center around helplessness (I am helpless, I am a failure, I am not good enough) or unlovability (I am undesirable, I am unworthy, I am bound to be rejected).³⁴ Core beliefs are only ideas and not truth; therefore they may be tested and modified based upon new information.³⁵ Successful therapy works on adjusting core beliefs through constant pressure on them through empirical testing. Patients are asked to support core beliefs with evidence. Similarly, they may be asked to compare themselves with others (Who at your school really is unlovable? Are you really like them, or are you different?). Emotional or experiential techniques such as role playing may be used to help patients reinterpret historical events that contributed to the development of irrational core beliefs.³⁶

In summary, cognitive therapy has cognitive restructuring as its central mechanism for change. Maladaptive behaviors and psychological distortions are a product of incorrect automatic thoughts governed by incorrect intermediate and core beliefs. By modifying these core commitments, the individual will experience relief. Individuals change in cognitive behavioral therapy because their thinking changes, and their thinking changes through a variety of rational and behavioral exercises that serve to test their beliefs against observable reality. Hence, empirical testing is baked into the very core of CT.³⁷

Foundational to this system is the belief that everything required of the patient to experience relief is found within himself. Beck states in no uncertain terms, “Man has the key to understanding and solving his psychological disturbance within the scope of his own awareness.”³⁸ This statement must be read against the psychoanalytic milieu from which Beck emerged.³⁹ His recognition that psychoanalysis simply did not work led him to develop a patient-centric form of therapy that emphasized collaboration rather than a therapist-dependent system. However, his therapy also does not descend into a nondirective approach. While man has the key to change within the scope of his own awareness, he can use a therapist as a helpful guide. There is no assumption that the individual can figure the path away from distress by himself. In short, Beck developed a man-centered approach that emphasized empowerment and rationality.

³³ Beck, *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, 166-167.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 172 - 173

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 184. See also Dienes, Torres-Harding, Reinecke, Freeman, and Sauer, “Cognitive Therapy,” 156-161 for a more detailed list of vehicles to promote cognitive restructuring.

³⁷ This naturally gives rise to the question of what constitutes reality. CBT does not operate on a system of universal absolutes and therefore cannot provide clients with an understanding of true truth. A critique of the postmodern ethos in CBT is outside the bounds of this paper.

³⁸ Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*, 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 203; Burns, *Feeling Good*, xi.

Integrationist Responses

Christian integrationists highly regard CBT for its integrative potential.⁴⁰ Mark McMinn holds that while “[c]ognitive therapy techniques are suitable for a variety of people. . . . Christian clients are particularly well suited for this method.”⁴¹ Gary Sibcy and John C. Thomas believe that “[m]any aspects of C[B]T are easily integrated into a Christian worldview for many of the key assumptions made in most approaches to cognitive [behavioral] therapy are consistent with Christian theology and biblical anthropology.”⁴² David J. Jennings II, Don E. Davis, Joshua N. Hook, and Everett L. Worthington, Jr. describe CBT as an “attractive treatment modality for religious clients” because its education methods fits well with Christian teachings about the Holy Spirit and its emphasis on beliefs “correspond nicely with an emphasis on the importance of Christian beliefs.”⁴³ Mark McMinn, Stanton Jones, Michael Vogel, and Richard Butman conclude that “. . . cognitive [behavioral] therapy is likely to be one of the more fruitful models for Christians to explore for its integrative potentials.”⁴⁴ Harry Shields and Gary J. Bredfeldt positively regard the cognitive paradigm as being “most easily harmonized with biblical teachings on Scripture.”⁴⁵ Siang-Yang Tan’s praise is even more effusive, “CBT, and especially CT, will continue to grow and expand in significant and substantial ways in the years ahead. Its future looks extremely bright as a primary, if not the premier, contemporary approach to therapy.”⁴⁶ Strongest of all, David Pecheur argues that “cognitive therapy appears to make explicit the process of growth indicated in Scripture. Consequently, it should be the most

⁴⁰ Integrationism is not a monolithic position, with a wide variety of positions taken on what degree of authority Scripture and psychology each retain, how particular therapies ought to be integrated, and to what degree theological fields such as sanctification overlap with therapy. For various representations of integrationism see Gary R. Collins, *The Rebuilding of Psychology: An Integration of Psychology and Christianity* (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 1977); John D. Carter and Bruce Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, Rosemead Psychology Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979); and David Entwistle, *Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity: An Introduction to Worldview Issues, Philosophical Foundations, and Models of Integration*, 3rd ed. (Eugene: Cascade 2016).

⁴¹ Mark McMinn, *Cognitive Therapy Techniques*, 14.

⁴² Sibcy and Thomas, “Cognitive-Based Strategies,” 47. An emphasis on the importance of truth, renewing one’s mind, and the ability to use Scripture as the basis for true belief are seen as especially relevant. Because “Christian conversion and sanctification transform thinking from the foundation,” CBT is seen as easily adapted for Christian practice. *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴³ Jennings et al., “Christian-Accommodative Cognitive Therapy for Depression” in *Evidence-Based Practices for Christian Counseling and Care* (Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2013), 84.

⁴⁴ McMinn, et al., “Cognitive Therapy,” 253.

⁴⁵ Shields and Bredfeldt, *Caring for Souls*, 281. Shields and Bredfeldt cite Prov 23:7 as support for this claim and declare that “Scripture teaches that our minds are the key linkage to our behavior.” *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Tan, *Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 282.

effective means of obtaining cognitive change and, concomitantly, emotional change in clients.”⁴⁷

Biblical - Theological Evaluation

The scope of this project cannot address every point of contention between CBT and biblical teaching. Rather, this evaluation will be limited to the mechanism for change posited by CBT. As noted above, CBT is organized around the concept that right thinking leads to right action (and right emotions). Replacing irrational or dysfunctional thinking with proper thinking eliminates psychological distress.

It should first be acknowledged that Beck’s schema does accurately convey some aspects of biblical transformation. Prov 12:5 does indicate that thoughts are directly tied an individual’s being. The wicked are wicked in part because they have wicked thoughts. Transformation into Christlikeness necessarily involves change in thinking (Phil 4:8, Rom 12:2).

Beck’s assertion that events themselves do not cause maladaptive behavior or psychological distress, but rather an individual’s interpretation of events does have some biblical warrant. In perhaps the clearest example, Paul writes to the Thessalonians that they are not to grieve as those “who have no hope” since we know that resurrection is the future of every believer (1 Thess 4:13-18). The Christian’s interpretation of death transformed the manner in which they grieved, imbuing hope in an otherwise hopeless situation.⁴⁸

The empirical success of CBT in reducing psychological distress across a wide variety of psychopathologies does serve as evidence that Beck’s cognitive theory and therapy has some merit. Its description of cognition – stimuli, automatic thoughts, and beliefs – very well may be correct, as it appears to match human experience on many levels. However, this does not establish it as fact,⁴⁹ nor does it aid the counselor by supplying a necessary component that is lacking in the Scriptures.⁵⁰ At best, Beck’s theory is good observational

⁴⁷ Pecheur, “Cognitive Theory/Therapy and Sanctification,” 239-253, 251.

⁴⁸ This is not to agree with Beck’s position that *all* psychiatric distress and maladaptive behavior comes from cognitive failure.

⁴⁹ The history of both science and psychology is replete with examples of theories that appeared to capture the true essence of reality but were later discarded. Epicycles, electron valence models, and phrenology all appeared to be true beyond reproach at one time, yet now lie in the dustbin of history.

⁵⁰ It is incorrect to argue that the Scriptures do not provide the specifics of a mechanism for change as does Pecheur. The Scriptures are able to make one wise (Ps 19), equip the saints for every good work (2 Tim 3:17), and expose the thoughts and the intentions of the heart (Heb 4:12). If the cognitive method is not explicitly developed, than this is unnecessary information. Pecheur looks for that which is not necessary, nor could ever be established as fact for all of humanity across all of history. McMinn similarly argues that the Bible does not inform Christians of the “mechanism” for forgiveness: “The practical strategies for

psychology. Like all other forms of observational psychology, such information can be helpful, but does not provide information essential for human transformation that is lacking in the Scripture. At worst, Beck's theory spawns a therapy that does not address the central issue in transformation.

Affections & Desires

Beck's theory of transformation introduces a hierarchy within human faculties. Reason (cognition) is given highest place, followed by behavior. The affective aspect of humanity is given scant treatment beyond being a problem that needs to be resolved through cognitive restructuring.⁵¹ Change is a one-way street; since *all* psychological distress and maladaptive behavior is a product of dysfunctional cognition, change must begin with cognitive restructuring. Beck's theory certainly is not devoid of acknowledging the reality of an affective component of human composition. Indeed, emotions and behaviors are clearly described as creating a reinforcing or altering impact upon further cognitive processes.⁵² However, the prime mover in creating these loops is cognition, placing affections to the position of a caboose pulled along by an engine of cognitions.⁵³

The heart psychology of New England theologian Jonathan Edwards serves as a helpful contrast with the heart psychology of CBT.⁵⁴ The importance of the affections was a

accomplishing forgiveness tend not to show up in the Bible, though it is clear we are called to figure it out. I have good news about this because positive psychologists have done tremendous work in figuring out the mechanism for forgiveness" (Mark McMinn, *The Science of Virtue: Why Positive Psychology Matters to the Church*, [Eugene: Brazos Press, 2017], 9).

⁵¹ This critique is not unique to biblical counseling. David Clark surveys criticism of CBT for its "limited view of emotion" (David A. Clark, "Perceived Limitations of Standard Cognitive Therapy: A Consideration of Efforts to Revise Beck's Theory," *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy* 9 no. 3 [1995]: 159.) See also Leslie Greenberg, "Emotion and Cognition in Psychotherapy: The Transforming Power of Affect," *Canadian Psychology* 49 no. 1 (2008): 55.

⁵² Aaron T. Beck and Gary Emery with Ruth Greenberg, *Anxiety Disorders and Phobias: A Cognitive Perspective*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Basic Books, 2005), 46

⁵³ Jones and Butman see in Beck a growing emphasis upon "emotions and developmental issues," charging that those who criticize Beck on this regard have not understood his introduction of motivational schemas within modes. However, they admit that while Beck's system can explain why an individual runs at the sight of a snake, it cannot explain why an individual loves nature. (Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 218). Thus, while Beck's theory does seek to help clients manage emotions, it does not address the heart on the level of desires/will (Dienes, Torres-Harding, Reinecke, Freeman, and Sauer, "Cognitive Therapy," 154). Interestingly, at least one outcome study reports that CBT tends to leave patients "more distant and disengaged from their emotional experience" than in Process-Experiential Therapy (Jeanne C. Watson and Danielle L. Bedard, "Clients' Emotional Processing in Psychotherapy: A Comparison Between Cognitive-Behavioral and Process-Experiential Therapies," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 74 no. 1 (2006):159.)

⁵⁴ "Heart psychology" refers to the organization of the inner man and the functions through which the heart operates.

key theme with Edwards' theology.⁵⁵ Contrary to the "Old Light" theologians who located genuine religion in "reason and judgment" followed by obedience, Edwards argued that "Christian experience cannot reside in the understanding *alone*."⁵⁶ Edwards saw the soul as "endued...with two faculties."⁵⁷ The "understanding" was the faculty "capable of perception and speculation" through discerning and judging things. The other faculty "does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers." It does not "behold things as an indifferent unaffected spectator," but likes generates likes and dislikes and approves or rejects. This faculty Edwards prefers to call the "heart."⁵⁸

This second faculty was of prime importance for Edwards in contemplating human transformation. The dead orthodoxy of the Old Light churches demonstrated the insufficiency of cognitive assent in itself to constitute true religion. Edwards understood the term "affections" in a robust sense. The affections encompassed human emotion, but advanced further to speak of underlying desires and loves.⁵⁹

A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections serves as Edwards' manifesto concerning the essential participation of affections alongside cognition in true religion. Edwards develops the thesis that "True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections" from both theological proofs and a theory of human motivation.⁶⁰

And as in worldly things worldly affections are very much the spring of men's motion and action; so in religious matters the spring of their actions is very much

⁵⁵ I am indebted to Jeremy Pierre for bringing my attention to Edwards' controversy with the Old Light preachers as relevant to the at-hand discussion.

⁵⁶ Iain Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1987), 252-253. Italics in original.

⁵⁷ Jonathan Edwards, "A Treatise on Religious Affections," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 6th printing, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 237. Edwards' embrace of faculty psychology contrasts with this author's own understanding of the heart. However, Edwards' faculty psychology is of a mild variety, without a strong hierarchy created between the understanding and the will. As such, his teaching on the will (which included the affections) is true helpful, albeit situated within a slightly misguided topography of the inner person. See Nate Brooks, "Love the Lord with All Your Heart" (Ph.D. diss, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 166-172.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 237. Edwards also proposes "inclination" or "will" when connected to actions. Edwards' appellation of "heart" to this faculty is technically incorrect, as the heart is better understood as an equivalent term to soul. However, his heart psychology still provides an accurate critique of CBT, despite the nomenclature errors.

⁵⁹ Ronald Story, *Jonathan Edwards and the Gospel of Love* (Amhurst: University of Massachusetts, 2012), 55, 100.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 236. See a lengthier expose on the topic of delight and desire in true Christian worship in John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003).

religious affection: he that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.⁶¹

Edwards did not believe that propositional truth (e.g., cognition) was unessential.⁶² Indeed, he critiqued the leading edge of Awakening preachers who abandoned biblical truth and began seeking heightened affections for their own sake.⁶³ Rather, Edwards identified affections as a critical aspect of transformation because the fountainhead of the affections is love.⁶⁴ True virtue consists not of “an act of the mind or exercise of love,” but rather “love to being in general.”⁶⁵ The chief virtue is therefore love to God, from which acts of the will then proceed.⁶⁶ Transformation is not a product of cognitive restructuring, but rather a synthesis of changed cognition and changed affections. Both come from the heart as it is transformed by the Spirit.

Although Edwards’ heart psychology is muddled in places, he offers a functional, true critique of CBT. Edwards has no dispute with Beck that that right thinking and right behavior are critical to human flourishing. However, he is skeptical of the idea that cognition is the fountain from which affections and behavior flow. The Scriptures give warrant to Edwards’ insistence that bare cognitive assent does not constitute true virtue, nor guarantee proper behavior.⁶⁷ The following Scriptural examples demonstrate that

⁶¹ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 238. He continues, “I am bold to assert that there never was any considerable change wrought in the mind or conversation of any person, by anything of a religious nature that ever he read, heard or saw, that had not his affections moved.”

⁶² “Indeed it cannot be supposed, when this affection of love is spoken of as the sum of all religion, that hereby is meant the act, exclusively of the habit, or that the exercise of the understanding is excluded, which is implied in all reasonable affection” (*Ibid.*, 240).

⁶³ Edwards condemns those who in the “time of their affection and heat of their zeal” did not maintain a mind towards biblical truth. These he compares to a dog who returns to its own vomit. He concludes, “Where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart. On the other hand, where there is a kind of light without heat...there can be nothing divine in that light.” See Iain Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, 201-230 for a discussion of Edwards’ affirmations and critiques.

⁶⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 240. James K.A. Smith develops this concept at length, “To be human is to be animated and oriented by some vision of the good life, some picture of what we think counts as ‘flourishing.’ And we *want* that. We crave it. We desire it. This is why our most fundamental mode of orientation to the world is love. We are oriented by our longings, directed by our desires. We adopt ways of life that are indexed to such version of the good life, not usually because we ‘think through’ our options but rather because some picture captures our imagination” (James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 11. See also James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 39-74.

⁶⁵ Jonathan Edwards, “On the Nature of True Virtue” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 6th printing, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 123.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁶⁷ Michael Emler writes, “Mere insight never changes anyone. People don’t change, not because they lack information but because they lack imagination that leads to action. eir desires are misdirected and stunted” (Michael Emler, “Practice Makes Perfect? Exploring the Relationship Between Knowledge, Desire, and Habit,”

individuals may correctly have correct cognitive belief about God and yet walk in disobedience.

Biblical Evaluation

The narrative portions of Scripture offer a host of evidences for the necessity of affections for right action. The account of Eve's fall makes use of affective—not cognitive—language. The tree was “good,” “delightful,” and “desirable” (Gen 3:6). “So she took of the fruit and ate. The imperfect *waw*-consecutive indicates indulging in the fruit as a consequential action from considering the tree as desirable.⁶⁸ While cognition is plainly in view as the woman believes the serpent's words over her Creator's, the text itself describes an affective struggle antecedent to her action, not cognitive.⁶⁹

The narrative of Abraham provides another example of the interplay between cognition, affection, and action. Genesis 15:6 declares that “Abraham believed God,” and this belief's fixed nature is demonstrated by the crediting to him of righteousness. Abraham deceitfully describes his wife as his sister before Abimelech (Gen 20). The center of Abraham's reasoning is fear: “They will kill me because of my wife” (20:11). Even though he believed God, this truly held belief did not compel action consistent with that belief, namely, Abraham could not have had a son through Sarah if he was dead. His fear (affection) led to evil action.⁷⁰

Jonah likewise did not doubt Yahweh's self-revelation of his character as a compassionate and gracious God who is slow to anger and rich in covenant love (Ex 34:6).⁷¹

Journal of Biblical Counseling, 27 no. 1 (2013): 45. Emler's article is worthy of further consideration as traces counseling implications of James K.A. Smith's anthropology in finding desires as the fountain from which human actions flow.

⁶⁸ Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 85. The HCSB and CSB capture this nuance “So she took” in contrast with ESV, NASB, NKJV, and NIV “she took.”

⁶⁹ Pierre helpfully notes, “Put differently, [Gen 3] shows us the interrelatedness of cognition, affection, and volition, all rightly understood as aspects of faith or unbelief, which is itself a relational reality...They hid themselves from one another with loincloths and from God in the trees, a volitional reality, because they were “afraid”, an affective reality. This was all the result of their broken trust in God, a relational reality” (Jeremy Pierre, “Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart: The Centrality of Faith in Christ to the Restoration of Human Functioning” [Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010], 169-170.

⁷⁰ The sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:1-19) offers a counterexample of proper affection compelling righteous action. Abraham had been promised that his line would continue through Isaac, yet God commanded Isaac to kill his son in ritual sacrifice. Abraham believed in God's promise despite the logical conundrum (22:5 “we will return”). See also Heb 11:17-19.

⁷¹ Jonah 4:2 directly quotes a line from Ex 34:6: “merciful and compassionate, slow to become angry, rich in faithful love.” Jonah replaces “abundant in faithful love” with “relents from sending disaster.”

Jonah's correct cognitive understanding of Yahweh led to his disobedient flight to Nineveh. Jonah desired (affection) the Ninevites' destruction and consequently fled from his task in proclaiming a message of repentance. This pattern is consistent in Jonah as his correct cognitive understanding of Yahweh as "God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land" did not give him pause from climbing aboard a boat in his flight (Jonah 1:9).

Throughout the Gospel narratives, unclean spirits consistently correctly identify Jesus' person and power.⁷² Mark 3:11 extends this to be the normative pattern for confrontation between Jesus and demonic powers. The unclean spirits' clear understanding of Jesus' person ("You are the Son of God") does not lead to humble worship, but rather to vitriol (Mark 5:7, 10). Satan knows his doom to be sure (Rev 12:12), yet spends his remaining years inciting further rebellion against the Most High God (Eph 4:27, 6:11; 2 Tim 2:26; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8).⁷³

Of the Epistles, James offers what is perhaps the clearest teaching on the relationship between affections and "maladjusted behavior." James 4:1-3 locates the source of trouble (be it psychological distress or rebellious actions) in men's passions. They "fight" and "quarrel," "murder" and "covet" because they "do not ask." Human trouble is triangulated on an axis of desiring and not receiving, not false cognitions.⁷⁴

The Scriptures clearly support Edwards' argument that affections are a critical aspect of human transformation. Pecheur's assertion that CBT "make[s] explicit the process of growth indicated in Scripture" is incorrect given that Scripture anticipates the change of affections as essential to the process of transformation.

Towards a Biblical Counseling Model

Counseling that is faithful to the biblical concept of heart psychology must address man's cognitive, affective, and behavioral functions. Jeremy Pierre's "Dynamic Heart

⁷² Mark 5:7, Luke 4:34, Mark 1:23-24, Mark 3:11, Luke 8:28

⁷³ It could be argued that fallen angels do not constitute an appropriate study group due to their different ontology and inability to repent. However, the contention of CBT is that right thinking leads to right action. Angels perceived true knowledge of God, yet rebelled against him. Their true knowledge of God is analogous to human knowledge, for it is knowledge of the true God. Their (perhaps clearer) sight of God did not compel right action, demonstrating something amiss in their affections.

⁷⁴ Other examples include Balaam's rebellion (Num 22), Saul's offering of sacrifices against divine command out of fear (1 Sam 15:24), David's correct application of the Law to Nathan's parable without applying it to his own situation (2 Sam 11:6), Jesus' covert 'disciples' who believed yet because they "loved the praise from men more than praise from God" refused to confess him as Christ (John 12:42-43), and Demas whose desertion certainly involved cognitive aspects but is framed in terms of affections ("because he loved this present world" 2 Tim 4:10). Indeed, any sin of any saint in the Scriptures follows this pattern as they act in disobedience against truly held beliefs by virtue of desiring the temporary pleasures of sin over obedience to Christ.

Model” offers a helpful counterpoint to Beck’s cognition-centric approach. Pierre sees faith as necessarily involving three “functions” of the human heart – “cognitive, volitional, and affective.”⁷⁵ Drawing on Edwards, Pierre describes the affective element as one’s “desires” and “emotions.” Christian transformation thus necessarily involves “turn[ing] from sinful passion to godly longings. Whereas before a person’s affections were stirred for selfish pleasures, faith transforms a person’s affections to be stirred by godly things.”⁷⁶

Pierre’s concept of how this impacts counseling is worth quoting at length:

The necessary interrelatedness of the heart's functions compels the counselor to address each of these functions as interdependent upon the others. Emphasizing one aspect without due attention to the others will lead to a lopsided view of people and a lopsided methodology in handling them. The cognitive, affective, and volitional ought not be treated in isolation from one another. *The human heart should not be addressed merely cognitively.* Understanding helpful propositions, even those revealed in Scripture, is insufficient if it does not lead to affective and volitional conformity. An exclusively-didactic style of counseling that focuses on knowledge can be in danger of not paying adequate attention to a counselee's emotional responses as a vital aspect of their heart's response to God. It can also overlook the need to call a person volitionally to decision and prolonged dedication.⁷⁷

Critical to Pierre’s counseling method is the assertion that the heart’s functions are “interrelated.” The human experience cannot be subdivided into homogenous cognitive, volitional, or affective components that operate separately or sequentially. Rather, each are the functioning of the heart viewed from different windows or emphases. Thus, wise counseling will operate on a tripolar axis as cognition, volition, and affection are all called upon to be transformed by grace through faith.

Pierre is not alone in his emphasis upon the necessity of the affections in counseling, though authors have often not been as exacting in their use of words. Paul David Tripp identifies the heart (defined as spirit, soul, mind, emotions, will, etc.) as the source of human action. Transformation therefore occurs through the replacement of ungodly desires with Christlike desires.⁷⁸ Timothy Lane and Tripp emphasize the meaning-making

⁷⁵ Pierre, “Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart,” 146-147. See also Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2016), 11-27.

⁷⁶ Pierre, “Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart,” 149-150. See also Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 69-86 (italics added).

⁷⁷ Pierre, “Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart,” 220-221 (italics in original).

⁷⁸ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002), 56-94.

aspect of affections by identifying the core of human problems as “worship disorders.”⁷⁹ Robert Kellemen uses the categories of “rational direction,” “relational motivation” and “volitional action” to describe the composition of the human heart. Biblical counseling must address the “very core” of an individual’s being, in which there are “affections, longings and desires.”⁸⁰ As noted above, Michael Emlet emphasizes the interplay between “knowledge, desire, and habit.”⁸¹ David Powlison’s X-Ray questions likewise frame counseling in an affective direction by beginning with the question, “What do you love? Hate?”⁸² Paul Tautges argues that “disciplined godliness” will always constitute disciplining the “thoughts of the mind,” “lusts of the heart,” and “habits of life.”⁸³

A proper heart psychology dismisses the concept that ameliorating cognitive distortions creates thorough human change. Transformative change will not happen if the deepest level of human desires is not addressed. While CBT correctly understands the importance of right cognition to human flourishing, it lacks the vision to see that cognitions alone do not control human behavior. The biblical picture, though described in many different terminologies by the above authors, places the affections as a critical component of the heart’s decision-making process. In short, people do what they love.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to prove that the mechanism of change proposed by CBT is insufficient due to its failure to interact with the affections. This has been demonstrated by both theological and biblical considerations. The biblical text does not bear out that correct cognition always leads to correct action. From our first parents until now, the unmaking of humanity has begun with aberrant desires that rejects comprehended truth based upon a rebellious heart orientation towards God’s revelation. Humanity is broken on the level of desires and therefore CBT’s lack of interest in transforming man’s loves is a fatal flaw. Any attempt to integrate CBT will always fail to produce a true theory because CBT itself is antithetical to the biblical picture of transformation. People are transformed when they

⁷⁹ Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2008), 134 . See also Paul David Tripp and Timothy Lane, “How Christ Changes Us By His Grace” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23 no. 2 (2005).

⁸⁰ Robert W. Kellemen, *Gospel-Centered Counseling: How Christ Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 102, 106.

⁸¹ Emlet, “Practice Makes Perfect?,” 26.

⁸² David Powlison, “X-ray Questions: Drawing Out the Whys and Wherefores of Human Behavior,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18 no. 1 1999, 2-9. See also David Powlison, “The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23 no. 2 (2005): 2-14.

⁸³ Paul Tautges, “Authentic Biblical Counseling: A Theology of Discipleship,” (D. S. M. diss. Northland Baptist Bible College, 2008), 113-146.

think God's thoughts after him, love God's loves after him, and act Christ's actions after him. In order for a theory to be biblical, none of these elements can be neglected.

REVIEWS

A Review of Harold Senkbeil's *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart*

By Greg E. Gifford¹

Harold Senkbeil is the Executive Director of DOXOLOGY, which is a part of the Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care. He has served in parish ministry and as an Associate Professor at Concordia Theological Seminary where he earned his BA, MDiv, and STM. As you will read in *The Care of Souls* there are strong Lutheran overtones in reference to pastoral ministry (i.e., 109).

Upon first glance, Senkbeil seems to be offering a classical understanding of the care of souls. His first chapter is dedicated to “What is a Pastor? The Classical Model” (8). This is Senkbeil’s definition of pastoral ministry: “So then, effective and faithful pastoral ministry in each succeeding era must remain intimately connected with its essential core – the divinely given presence of Christ Jesus and the truth of his word by which alone we live” (17). From Senkbeil’s perspective, “this chapter is about the classical model of pastoral care” (16).

When the reader starts the book, undoubtedly, they will find that Senkbeil is familiar with church tradition in regard to the care of souls. Senkbeil even suggests the historic, “classical heritage of the ‘cure of souls’ as it is called in the church’s collective tradition (xix). Senkbeil credits Thomas Oden and Eugene Peterson as being “Twentieth century champions of this classical legacy” of the care of souls (xix).

Instead of a classical understanding of soul care, however, Senkbeil offers another pastoral methodology resource. Senkbeil addresses purity for the pastor (263), prayer (245), spiritual warfare (195) and other methodological suggestions. In favor of this work, he started with classic verbiage that should pique your interest and centralizes the pastor as the one who is the carer and ‘curer’ of souls (62-63). Unfortunately, Senkbeil seems to lack clarity in the true care of souls as seen in

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comments like this: “You are neither trained nor licensed as a therapist. That’s why as a pastor you will do well to find a competent psychologist who is skilled in the relationships between cognition and behavior” (180). Senkbeil overlooks that pastors are facing a jurisdictional struggle with would-be carers of the soul in psychologists and therapists. To refer to other-than carers of the soul is to deflect the God-ordained responsibilities of the pastor (Heb. 13:17). Thus, he centralizes soul care to pastors only to de-centralize soul care, again.

Overall, this work is not a classical pastoral work in the historical understanding of the term “soul care.” Yet, it does provide insightful pastoral comments and suggestions in practice. For the biblical counselor and modern carer of souls, this work would be appropriate if you were searching for pastoral insights primarily. To find a classical understanding of the care of souls, either in historical perspective or practical theology, Senkbeil’s work falls short.

RESPONSES