

CHAPTER THREE

EVALUATING MODELS OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

In order to effectively evaluate a model of Christian counseling, at least three potentially inter-related disciplines of inquiry must be examined. These include the theological underpinnings of the model, the psychological dimensions evident, and the degree or extent that the model assumes a level of spiritual intelligence. Scrutinizing these underlying assumptions enables one to determine the logical consistency of a particular model of Christian counseling and to ascertain the efficacy and efficiency of the approach as a legitimate means of counseling. The adage that “our assumptions determine our outcomes,” is certainly applicable to this endeavor.

Theological Underpinnings

The process of exploring the **theological underpinnings** of a particular model of Christian counseling involves ascertaining to what extent the author presents implicitly or explicitly a(n):¹

- **Doctrine of God** – the study of what is believed to be true about God.
- **Cosmology** – the study of the universe, including its origin, evolution, and overall structure.
- **Theological anthropology** – the study of the doctrine of humanity, which views humans in terms of their relationship to God. Reflecting on such issues as the origin, purpose, and destiny of humankind in light of Christian theological understandings.
- **Harmartiology** – the study of the doctrine of sin.
- **Soteriology** – the study of the doctrine of salvation.

¹ Definitions used are adapted from the *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, McKim (1996).

- **Christology** – the study of the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Pneumatology** – the study of the theological doctrine of the Holy Spirit.
- **Ecclesiology** – the study of the church as a biblical and theological topic.
- **Eschatology** – the study of the last things or the end of the world.

In general, the theological differences between various Christian denominations and religious sects can usually be distinguished, based on how one defines the above listed theological constructs. So too, models of Christian counseling will differ, based on how the meaning of these theological notions are employed by their respective authors.

Psychological Underpinnings

The process of exploring the **psychological underpinnings**² of a particular model of Christian counseling involves ascertaining to what extent the author incorporates elements of one or more of the following psychologies:

- **Dynamic psychologies** – including classical psychoanalysis, contemporary psychodynamic psychotherapies, and Jungian therapy.
- **Behavioral psychologies** – including behavioral therapy, rational-emotive therapy, and cognitive-behavioral therapy.
- **Humanistic psychologies** – including person-centered therapy, existential therapy, gestalt therapy, and transactional analysis.
- **Family systems psychologies** – including various forms of family therapy.

Models of Christian counseling will differ based on the psychological presuppositions that they embrace.

² For a review of various attempts to integrate certain psychological models with the practice of Christian counseling, see especially Shafranske (1996, p.p. 391-533) and the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, (Spring 1997, vol. 25:1, p.p. 81-163).

Spiritual Underpinnings

The process of exploring the **spiritual underpinnings** or the use of **spiritual intelligence** in a particular model of Christian counseling involves ascertaining the degree or extent that the author incorporates **spiritual resources** in the counseling process and or advocates the perfection of certain **Christian virtues or character traits**.³ Spiritual resources might include but are not limited to:

- **Surrender, Confession, Forgiveness**
- **Prayer, Meditation, Study and Memorization of Scripture**
- **Baptism, Communion, Worship**
- **Solitude, Fasting**
- **Restitution, Service, Witnessing**

Virtues⁴ might include but are not limited to:

- **Gratitude, Humility, Integrity, Serenity**
- **Faith, Hope, Love**
- **Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness**
- **Meekness, Self Control, Righteousness, Endurance, Godliness**

Models of Christian counseling differ in their incorporation and usage of **spiritual resources** and the **virtues or character traits** they might emphasize.

³ For a review of how spiritual resources and or virtues have been incorporated into the practice of Christian counseling, see especially Miller (1999) and McMinn (1996).

⁴ Biblically, virtues are referred to as fruit of the spirit. See especially Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Timothy 6:11, and 2 Timothy 2:22.

Theological, Psychological, and Spiritual

Figure 1.0 below depicts a three dimensional representation of three factors in need of examination, in order to adequately evaluate a model of Christian counseling.

Figure 3.0 Theological, Psychological, and Spiritual Dimensions of a Model of Christian Counseling

[Insert Figure 3.0 here]

Application of this tool will be applied to four different models of Christian counseling. Examined first will be the “nouthetic” counseling model of Jay Adams (1970, 1973, 1979). Evaluated next will be Bill Gothard’s (1981, 1984, 1987, 1993-99) “basic life principles” model of Christian counseling. Thirdly, Robert McGee’s (1993, 1994, 1998) “search for significance” model of Christian counseling will be assessed. Finally, Kenneth Haugk’s (1984, 2000, 2000) model of “Christian care giving” will be scrutinized.

Jay Adams’ Nouthetic Counseling

Theological underpinnings.

The underpinnings of Jay Adams’ nouthetic model of Christian counseling are presented in three separate texts written over a ten year span of time. These texts include his 1970 book, *Competent to Counsel*, his 1973 writing, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, and his 1979 transcript, *More Than Redemption: A Theology of Christian Counseling*. Key to comprehending each of these texts is a thorough understanding of Adams’ representation of the Greek term *nouthesis* and his notion of *nouthetic confrontation*.

Adams (1970, p.p. 44-64) explains that the Greek word *nouthesis* vacillates in translation “between the words admonish, warn, and teach” and sometimes is translated as counsel. One

translator renders it “put sense into.” Arguing that *nouthesis* has “no exact English equivalent,” Adams suggests that the word is best understood as both “a concept and a practice.” *Nouthetic confrontation*, therefore, consists of three basic elements.

One element of *nouthetic confrontation* involves a type of teaching that “presupposes the need for a change in the person confronted.” The teaching, the making of information “known, clear, understandable, and memorable,” may or may not be welcomed. But none the less, the person confronted has done something wrong and faces “some sin, some obstruction, some problem, some difficulty, some need that has to be acknowledged and dealt with.” Adams points out, therefore, that “the fundamental purpose of *nouthetic confrontation* is to effect personality and behavioral change.”

The second element of *nouthetic confrontation* involves employing biblically legitimate “verbal means ... the training by word of mouth ... a person to person verbal communication” aimed at “straightening out the individual by changing patterns of behavior to conform to biblical standards.” Emphasis is placed on the verbal exchange to get the receiver to focus on the “what” of their problem, instead of the “why.” Adams explains that the why is already known. We get into trouble in our “relationships to God and others” because of our sinful nature. This aspect of *nouthetic confrontation*, therefore, stresses “personal conference and discussion” for the purpose of bringing about “greater conformity to biblical principles and practices.”

The third element of *nouthetic confrontation* “implies changing that in his life which hurts the counselee.” Adams explains: “The goal must be to meet obstacles head on and overcome them verbally, not in order to punish but to help him.” The motive for advising, admonishing, and warning the counselee of the error of his/her ways must be “love and deep concern, in which clients are counseled and corrected by verbal means for their good, ultimately,

of course, that God may be glorified.” Therefore, *nouthetic confrontation* is scriptural confrontation, using “the principles and practices of the scriptures” to help the counselee develop a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

Adams is quite explicit about his understanding of God. His **doctrine of God** emphasizes that God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. Adams (1979, p. vii) explains:

...God must be omniscient to know all aspects of a situation in order to answer prayer, that He must be omnipresent to hear all prayers uttered at all times and in all places, that He must be omnipotent in order to respond to every circumstance in any way that He wishes and that it takes a God who is all three to bring about His universal goals through each particular in the universe in relation to every other particular both in the past and future as well as in the present ...

Adams (1979, p.p. 47-84) points out that effective counseling requires the counselor to both believe in and express to the counselee the “sovereignty of a beneficent God” explaining “that things are that way because they are in God’s plan and under God’s control, and that through them He will work all such things for His good and the good of His people.” Adams’ **cosmology** emphasizes that God is a living God who is the “person in charge.” Adams elaborates:

God is in charge of the counselor, the counselee and the counseling. He will not strike bargains or compromise with the counselee. He isn’t going to abandon His wisdom to accommodate the foolishness of human wisdom (ignorance). He won’t stop loving to conform to the counselee’s hatred and bitterness. He won’t forget His own holiness to overlook the counselee’s unholy desires. It is the counselee who must conform to his environment (God), not the other way around.

Adams also emphasizes that God is a God of justice. Although many of our experiences may appear unjust, their imbalance is only temporary, for “the picture is larger than it may seem.” Circumstances must be reviewed in light of the cross in a world “where a good God reigns.” We learn from God’s many names the revelation of “His provisions, His care, His protection, His concern, His faithfulness.” For God is the source of all wisdom, help, correction, and blessing. Adams (1973, p.p. 35-36) emphasizes:

The biblical principle is that it is only the long-term that can fuse short-term purposes and goals into a meaningful overall pattern. God is the Alpha and Omega, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is the One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Thus all purposes take on ultimate meaning only in relationship to Him. Apart from Him, they are simply isolated short-term objectives which randomly come and go without any necessary connection and, thus, no ultimate purpose.

In conclusion, Adams “reemphasizes the fact that God is man’s basic environment. ... God is around us, in us, and with us.” But our rebelliousness resulted in our estrangement and alienation from God. In an unregenerate state, we remain uncertain, void of absolutes and standards outside of ourselves, never sure about our lives, continuing to be antagonistic toward God and being ultimately “unhappy and uncomfortable with” and at odds with our environment.

Adams’ (1979, p.p. 118- 161) **theological anthropology** stems from his systematic study of scripture. He concludes that it is our “likeness to God” that makes us “different from the animals,” and “that (in part at least, though some say this is the whole of it) we are intelligent, morally responsible creatures.” We are as was Adam, “material, spiritual, moral and social beings.” And because of Adam, we are also totally depraved – “corrupted in all areas of life, though not totally corrupt in each.” We are “ sinners perverted from birth” capable of developing “sinful response patterns” from the beginning of our lives that foster problems in all of life situations. Counselors, therefore, “must discover and help Christians find God’s solutions to these human problems caused by sin.”

Adams’ **harmartiology**, or doctrine of sin, results from his systematic study of the word as revealed in the Old and New testament. Sin incorporates, Adams (1979, p.p. 147-152) explains, many meanings as indicated by such words as:

bent, breaking up or ruin, rebellion against a rightful authority, revolt, treason, not knowing which way to turn (tossing), a breach of trust, unfaithfulness, treachery, vanity, guilt through negligence or ignorance, fall short of , miss the mark, trouble travail, weariness, unjust, unfair, crossing the boundary line, lawlessness, disobedience to a call,

falling when one should stand upright, ignorance of what one ought to know, defect, short coming.

These descriptions, Adams points out, speak of either the act (state) of or the effects of sin. For sin, Adams concludes, is “lawlessness, disobedience to God, ... failure to what God requires or any transgression of what He forbids.” Sin involves more than alienation in human relationships, it involves “a personal affront to the Creator” that results in an alienation from God.

Adams’ (1979, p.p. 177-248) **soteriology**, or his doctrine of salvation embraces the reformed (reformation) tradition. Adams explains that salvation is the core reason why Christian counseling is possible, “it is the foundation (or basis) for all counseling.” Noting the “impossibility of counseling unbelievers,” proper counseling involves “working with saved persons to enable them to make changes, at a level of depth that pleases God.” Salvation equips the sinner with the word and spirit of God creating a genuine hope “based on the unfulfilling promises of God that He has recorded in the scriptures.” For the saved person is privy to both God’s direction and the power to achieve it as dependency on human strength is replaced by the “written, revealed word of God.” “No matter what the problem is,” Adams claims, “the far-more-abounding nature of the grace of Jesus Christ in redemption” will make the difference in our counseling.” Adams elaborates:

The good news is that Christ died for our sins (a penal, substitutionary, sacrificial death) and that He rose (bodily) from the dead (cf. I Cor. 15:3). This good news must be announced to all the world. With that proclamation must go a call to a new way of thinking that leads to faith and forgiveness. This new way of thinking is repentance (*metanoia*). Repentance is (literally) a change of mind; a rethinking. ... Repentance refers to a change of heart—a new orientation of the inner man brought about by the Holy Spirit. It involves a rethinking of one’s relationships toward God, one’s self, sin, Christ, others, etc. It leads to the conclusion that “I am a sinner who must trust Christ alone for forgiveness of sin.” Repentance after repentance leads to a similar conclusion: “I have sinned against my heavenly Father; I must ask Him to forgive me through Christ.” Repentance is known to be genuine when the inner changes of heart lead to outer changes in life. The two are connected, but must never be confused.

Salvation involves our reconciliation with God. It entails confession and forgiveness leading to the establishment of a new relationship with God. It involves a confession that acknowledges “on our part that we *agree* with God in what He has said about our sin in His Word. We stand on His side—the side of the One offended—and acknowledge that He is right in holding us guilty of an offense.” This confession results in our acknowledgement of our “guilt and liability” to God and others we have wronged. It involves asking for forgiveness with the hope of “establishing of a new and better relationship, replacing enmity and alienation with peace and fellowship.”

Adams’ (1979, p.p. 174-182) **Christology**, his study of the person and work of Jesus Christ, also stems from a reformed (reformation) view. He contends that without Christ’s atoning sacrifice our reconciliation with God would not be possible and the conduct of Christian counseling would be futile. Believing Christ to be the “incarnate Son,” Adams asserts that Christ presented God’s plan for human salvation. For Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, “was a carefully thought through, well planned, and precisely executed program.” Christ’s death saved us from “the penalty of sin (justification) ... the power of sin (sanctification), ... and from the presence of sin (glorification).”

Carefully linked to his views of **soteriology** and **Christology** are Adams’ (1979, p. 264) notions about **pneumatology**, the theological doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Whereas Christ’s death makes reconciliation possible, His resurrection and ongoing presence in the form of the Holy Spirit makes change possible. We no longer need to linger in the aftermath of our shortcomings but we can embrace new, lasting and sustaining virtues. Adams explains:

Because the Spirit works in the inner person, to change one’s thinking and attitudes, counselors will focus on inculcating the biblical data that (1) set the standards for Christian behavior, and that (2) point to specific principles and practices of Christian-living. Moreover, they will take the time to show how (practically) these can be

integrated into the particular situation that each counselee faces. Since the Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures, they can count on Him (in His own way and time) to bless their faithful ministry of the Word.

Adams' **ecclesiology** (1979, p.p. 281-282), the study of the church as a biblical and theological topic, is underscored by his insistence that "every new convert should be encouraged to obey Jesus Christ immediately." He argues that "we should not wait until someone gets into trouble months (or years) later in order to instruct him." While emphasizing the need to teach converts basic doctrine and encouraging them to engage in regular "Bible study, prayer, church attendance and witnessing," he points out, that "the greatest need for a new convert," however, "is to recognize that his life *as a whole* must change. Christ wants him to be different across the board." Every congregation, therefore, "must have a purposeful plan and practical program to accomplish this."

Adams' (1979, p.p. 300-307) view of **eschatology**, the study of the end of the world, emphasizes that there will be "a judgment for all after death." Cautioning that we should not be "trying to take the sting out of death apart from the cross of Christ," we should remember that "a fearful anticipation of judgment and the fury of fire" belongs to "God's adversaries." Unfortunately for many, "existence in eternal separation from God" awaits them, forgoing "the blessings and joys of living with and serving God for eternity." For Adams notes, that "as we have seen in the last chapter, the Bible teaches there will be a judgment for all after death."

Adams (1973, p. 4) emphasizes that God "holds each one of us personally responsible for his thoughts, words, and actions regardless of external pressures and influences." All will appear "before the judgment seat of Christ," each of us will "be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." But, Adams (1973, p. 41) explains, there is "hope for the *eschaton* (the last time, the future)." The coming of Christ, "the

resurrection of the body, and the erasure of sin, pain, and tears ... with its crowning hope—the presence of Christ ... the hope (expectation) of final perfection,” all this gives us reason to have hope. But, Adams emphasizes, the abundant life is also available now. As we apply the gospel to the alleviation of our sinful behavior, the believer can experience and “enjoy the peace, comfort, and assurance of the fullness of the living Christ here in this life.”

In summary, we can conclude that the theological underpinnings of Adams’ nouthetic counseling stress to the reader that “truth and godliness are interrelated in such a way that it isn’t possible to have one without the other, and that, therefore, counselors must become biblical theologians if they would see their counselees grow by God’s grace.”

Psychological underpinnings.

Adams (1979, p.p. xi-xii) makes it perfectly clear that “psychiatric and psychoanalytic dogmas” have no place in the church, for these beliefs are “every bit as pagan and heretical (and therefore perilous) as propagating the teachings of some of the most bizarre cults.” In fact, Adams explains: “The cults are less dangerous because their errors are more identifiable, since they are controverted by existing creedal statements. Adams (1973, p.p. 9-10) further elaborates:

Biblically, there is no warrant for acknowledging the existence of a separate and distinct discipline called psychiatry. There are, in the Scriptures, only three specified sources of personal problems in living: demonic activity (principally possession), personal sin, and organic illness. These three are interrelated. All options are covered under these heads, leaving no room for a fourth: non-organic mental illness. There is, therefore, no place in a biblical scheme for the psychiatrist as a separate practitioner.

Adams (1973, p.p. 33-34) for example, takes exception to Christian writer Gary Collins, who advocates that “neither psychology nor theology has a clear statement about the nature of man.” Adams argues that such statements that there is no “biblical view of man” reveal “a profound ignorance of the history and results of theology and exegesis.” Besides, Adams contends, it is futile “to attempt to find reality in the eclectic fusion of Christian theology and psychological

speculation.” Additionally, Adams (1973, p. 92) points out, “the Bible does not need to be “balanced” off by modern psychology. Nor may it be “combined” with psychology to construct a balanced approach.”

For Adams (1979, p. xiii) therefore, the Bible, not psychology “is the basis for a Christian’s counseling,” for it “deals with the same issues that all counseling does.” The Bible “was given to help men come to saving faith in Christ and then to transform believers into His image” Adams (1973, p. 92) elaborates:

God sets forth *His* approach in the Scriptures. The principles of His approach are plainly revealed in His Word. On the basis *of* these principles (not in combination with Rogerian, Freudian, or Skinnerian principles), he may discover that some aspect of non-Christian methodology in some way may remind, illustrate, or amplify a biblical principle. But the principle must be scriptural. From a biblical foundation, upon which a house of biblical methodology has been constructed, a Christian counselor may view the surrounding landscape. But he must not construct his foundation or house out of any non-Christian materials.

Even though Adams strongly denounces any association with psychological principles or their usage, review of his therapeutic model indicates a close resemblance to many of the principles and practices of the **behavioral psychologies**, especially cognitive-behavioral therapy.

For example, in his defense of *nouthetic counseling* Adams (1979, p. 170) writes: “The charge that *nouthetic counseling* cares little about cognitive matters is absurd (indeed, it is seriously misleading).” Continuing his argument, Adams explains: “It is questionable whether any other system of counseling, purporting to be biblical, has (1) ever attempted to consider the various dimensions of such instruction as thoroughly, or (2) enjoined teaching so forcefully and insistently.” Adams (1979, p.p. 166-167) explains how “human sinful thought has so perverted biblical values that an entire system of such value-reversal could be developed and seriously entertained as an option by many.” Self-actualized living “grounded on selfishness, desire for power, wealth, etc., rather than on the desire to live in a way that pleases God .. this hedonism is

directly opposed to the Christian emphasis to ‘seek first’... and to ‘lose your life’.” Such convictions, he points out, have created “an intellectual-moral battle ... not merely the battle for the mind,” but “a battle for the *whole* man.” We must, therefore with Paul, “tear down arguments and every high barrier that is raised against the knowledge of God [in order to] take every thought captive and bring it into obedience to Christ.”

Further evidence of a cognitive-behavioral approach to counseling is noted when Adams (1979, p.p. 168-169) writes about counselee’s adopting “erroneous explanations of life.” He explains that in such instances the counselor must call the counselee “to repentance (a change of *thinking*) for his arrogance against God and for believing and living lies. Positively, they must present God’s truth and call him to believe and walk according to it.” Similar examples are noted in Adams’ (1979, p.p. 263-264) explanation of sanctification. He writes:

How, then, does sanctification take place? Patterns of thinking and living change as one is “renewed by the Spirit” (Who is working) in his “mind” (Eph. 4:23). While I have considered in part the human side of this renewal (vs. 22, 24), I must here say a word about the Spirit’s work in renewing God’s image by renewing the mind (cf. Col. 3:9, 10; Rom. 12:1, 2). Because the Spirit works in the inner person, to change one’s thinking and attitudes, counselors will focus on inculcating the biblical data that (1) set the standards for Christian behavior, and that (2) point to specific principles and practices of Christian living.

Or, observe Adams’ (1970, p.p. 68-69) explanation of repentance “as a change of mind leading to a new outlook in which faith in Christ brings about a change of purpose and a change of direction.” Or also note how Adams’ (1973, p. 191) presentation of a seven step change process parallels the thinking of many cognitive-behavioral therapists [for example, see Ross (1994, p.p. 77-82)].

1. Becoming aware of the Practice (pattern) that must be dehabituated (put off);
2. Discovering the biblical alternative;
3. Structuring the whole situation for change;
4. Breaking links in the chain of sin;
5. Getting help from others;

6. Stressing the whole relationship to Christ;
7. Practicing the new pattern.

Indeed, the evidence strongly suggests that Adams' model of *nouthetic counseling* mirrors many of the precepts of cognitive-behavioral therapy, especially the notions of dysfunctional thoughts and the principles of change.

Spiritual underpinnings.

Adams would advocate the usage of any and all **spiritual resources** that are clearly delineated in scripture. As previously clarified, the Bible or scripture serves as the foundational basis for *nouthetic confrontation*. Adams (1979, p.p. xiii-xiv) explains:

The Bible is the basis for a Christian's counseling because of what counseling is all about (changing lives by changing values, beliefs, relationships, attitudes, behavior). What other source can provide a standard for such changes? What other source tells us how to make such changes in a way that pleases God? That is why other foundations for counseling must be rejected. Not only are they *not needed* (the Bible is adequate—the unique One, Who is *the* Counselor proved that by His own counseling ministry), but since they seek to do the same sorts of things (without the Scriptures and the Spirit), they are *also competitive*. God doesn't bless His competition! Nor does He bless disobedience to His Word by His servants.

Therefore, Adams concludes, we as counselors are to be “ministers of the Word” being careful not to “forsake the Fountain of living water for the cracked cisterns of modern counseling systems.”

Second in primacy as a spiritual resource for Adams would be the usage of prayer. Adams explains that it is important to pray “asking God for wisdom, help, correction and blessing upon our undertakings” as counselors. Adams (1979, p. 62) explains:

... the counselor must pray for himself and his counselees, asking God to use His Word as it is ministered in the counseling sessions, requesting wisdom for himself in the selection, understanding and use of the Scriptures, in gathering and analyzing data according to biblical norms, and seeking God's help in preparing the soil in the counselee's heart (inner life) for the sowing of the scriptural seed.

Usage of prayer in this manner reinforces our understanding of the basic biblical principle “that all that is happening is taking place in the presence of God, for His glory and in dependence on Him.”

Adams (1979, p.p. 61-76) also concludes that prayer is an essential part of the confession and salvation processes and is also important in both the commitment phase and the thanksgiving phase of counseling. But Adams cautions that prayer should not “stand alone as the biblical solution to a problem.” To the complaining counselee who remarks that “I prayed about it and nothing happened,” we should emphatically respond with the rhetorical question, “did you pray that the Lord would give you the strength and wisdom to *do*?”

Therefore, for Adams, prayer has a “*central* place in Christian counseling, both for the counselor and for the counselee.” Consequentially, any counseling that fails to incorporate prayer, “that it is the power of God that transforms counsees” is essentially non-Christian. Sub-sequentially, prayer “must have a prominent place, since both counselor and counselee must ask for God’s help and depend upon Him to give it.”

The biblical notions of acceptance, surrender, confession, and forgiveness, especially as understood within a context of salvation, are also useful spiritual resources in Adams’ (1979, p.p. 172-217) model of *nouthetic counseling*. For counseling to be successful, the counselee must not entertain any illusions and must come to full **acceptance** of the “realities of human sin and error.” The counselee must **surrender** to the facts that dependence on our “own sinful wits (or the counselor’s) for change” is insufficient, for it is the Word and the spirit that “provide all that is necessary to renew the mind (Rom. 12:1, 2) and enable us to understand, believe and obey.” Surrender leads to **confession**. Not a catharsis per se, but essentially, an agreement, “an acknowledgment on our part that we *agree* with God in what He has said about our sin in His

Word. We stand on His side—the side of the One offended—and acknowledge that He is right in holding us guilty of an offense.” Confession becomes a formal acknowledgment of the fact “I have sinned; I am liable ... it involves a personal, on-the-record admission of guilt.” Confession leads “quite naturally, to asking **forgiveness** from God and those others who may have been wronged, followed by the granting of forgiveness and the establishing of a new and better relationship to them.” Adams explains:

A forgiving person, then, is one who is no longer held liable for his sin. He cannot be held accountable (cf. Rom. 3:19). Clearly, according to this usage, something is *held* against someone until he is forgiven. But when forgiveness occurs, he is *freed* from that condition; nothing is held against him any more. That liability to, or threat of punishment has been lifted, removed; it has been let go and has gone away.

Adams emphasizes that “forgiveness never ignores sin, or tolerates it (accepting the other person *as he is*); rather, forgiveness is forgiveness of *sin* (seen to be, acknowledged and repented of *as sin*).” Forgiveness, he explains, “focuses on the fact that there was an offense; it does not turn away from this fact but deals with it.” He also warns that “psychological doctrines of acceptance are cheap substitutes for forgiveness” because they “deny the need for and efficacy of Christ’s atonement,” nor do they make demands for changing the sinful behavior. For psychological notions of change ignore the importance of a sense of guilt, the need to confess it, and the importance of forgiveness. For it is in our acceptance, surrender, and confession that God is able to forgive us and thus, restore our relationship to Him.

The development of Christ-like **virtues** or what is commonly referred to in the Bible as “fruit of the spirit” is at the heart of Adams’ (1979, p.p. 249-262) model of *nouthetic counseling*. Adams contends that the “goal of sanctification is not only to put off the works of the flesh, but in its place to put on the fruit of the Spirit. He elaborates:

Growth is gradual; man can assist producing it, but cannot initiate it or assure its production. Fruit cannot be manufactured, but growth may be promoted by providing

such important elements as light, water, nutrients, etc. The growth of fruit depends upon care and cultivation. Counselors, ministering the Word, work under the Spirit in His orchard, to provide such care. So, then, both the progressive nature of sanctification and the necessity for care and cultivation are aptly depicted by the term *fruit*.

He further explains:

The production of the Spirit's fruit, then, involves human agency; it is not procured passively, but by "pursuing" it. The pursuit of fruit is a large factor in the task of Christian counseling. We must discover how this pursuit of fruit takes place in counseling and how the Spirit produces fruit in the life of its pursuers. A discussion of these factors must precede a consideration of the individual items that are designated "fruit."

Adams concludes that the "pursuit of fruit in counseling is a top priority." They "become goals for Christian counselors to pursue in all their counseling." Therefore, it is essential that the Christian counselor "understand the basic meaning of each term and how it may be pursued." Counselors must become "adept at locating such lacks in their counselees, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and in describing each quality in depth." In short, "they must understand the Spirit's fruit thoroughly." Emphasizing that the Bible claims that our personality is fluid rather than certain, that is, susceptible to the changing influence of God and the Holy Spirit, Adams explains that *nouthetic confrontation* can help counselees effect personality change. This is accomplished by encouraging counselees to pursue the "fruit of the spirit." Adams explains:

The Spirit's fruit, from one perspective, may be said to consist of a fairly comprehensive list of desirable personality traits, the acquisition and development of which ought to be a goal of counseling. It is safe to say that a person who has learned to produce such luscious fruit in profusion is a person who has overcome his difficulties and (except for occasional instructive guidance, perhaps) needs no further counseling. So, the pursuit of fruit in counseling represents the positive (or, to use the language of Paul elsewhere, the "put on" side of sanctification.

Therefore, fruit of the spirit will emerge, when we teach our counselees how to pray, regularly study the Bible, and daily apply the principles of scripture to our lives.

Bill Gothard's "Basic Life Principles" Model of Christian Counseling

Theological underpinnings.

Central to comprehending Bill Gothard's (1981, p. 5) model of Christian counseling is grasping his notion of seven "basic life principles." He explains: "Underlying all the basic teachings of Christ there are significant principles which are essential for successful living." These principles include design, responsibility, authority, suffering, ownership, freedom, and success. The principle of *design* encompasses God's "precise purposes for each person" from which we derive "our identity and fulfillment on life." *Responsibility* emphasizes that "God holds us personally responsible for every one of our words, thoughts, actions, attitudes and motives." *Authority* reminds us that "God has established a structure of authority and a balance of power," a system of accountability. *Suffering* embraces ordained grace "for personal cleansing, growth, and achievement by learning how to properly respond to those who offend us." *Ownership* enables us "to conquer anger and worry as we acknowledge that all we have is from Him and belongs to Him." *Freedom* directs us to God's power to do His will in "morals and finances" enabling us "to serve others in love." *Success* helps us to rejoice in the knowledge that "God conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ." By engrafting these scriptural truths "into our soul," a renewed mind emerges equipped with God's power to "live above the law of sin." But when one or more of these basic principles of God are "violated or neglected," Gothard cautions, "breakdowns result in one or more of these basic relationships of life: response to God, acceptance of self, family harmony, purpose for the future, effectiveness in friendships, harmony in dating and marriage, management of financial affairs."

Gothard explains that the root cause of our problems resides in our resistance to God's grace. Our stubbornness and/or open rebelliousness produces a dependence on our natural inclinations which sub sequentially, lead to the violation of one or more of God's seven basic principles. These violations produce characteristics of "bitterness, greed, and moral impurity." These in turn foster attitudes of "inferiority, frustration, anger, envy, jealousy, insecurity, discontent, guilt/fear, lust/passions, and pride." These attitudes, then, fuel visible actions of "wrong dress, slander, profanity, lying/flattery, stealing, vandalism, drugs/rock music, pornography, and arguments."

Counseling for Gothard (1993, p.p. 4-8) therefore, consists of helping the counselee identify the basic principle or principles being violated and then assisting the counselee in taking "clear and logical steps of action" necessary "to reconstruct thinking and direction." Critical to this process is introducing the counselee to the appropriate scripture that serves as the foundation for the seven "basic life principles" and that "strengthen and reaffirm" the steps taken to correct the violations. For a counselor's responsibility, Gothard insists, is "to assist people in tracing surface problems to root causes" helping the counselee "to distinguish between his natural inclinations and the non-optional principles of God's Word," going beyond one's "own perspective" to "see a problem or circumstances from God's point of view." It is a counselor's responsibility to explain "Biblical disciplines which promise to reward" and to urge "believers to accept them as apart of their lives." This process involves "helping a person resolve fear, depression, anger, lust, and other destructive emotions by relating them to 'strongholds' which can be torn down with Biblical truth."

The goal for therapy therefore, becomes one of helping the client achieve self-acceptance by building spiritual maturity. Gothard (1987, p.p. 4-5) points out that this spiritual maturity,

learning God's design for your life, is achieved through the development of a *good conscience* by *proper submission*, obtaining *full forgiveness*, *yielding of our rights*, actively pursuing *moral purity*, and by *meditation*. Applying the principle of *responsibility* produces a *good conscience*. The *success* principle is achieved through *meditation* and the engrafting of scripture into the soul. *Authority* occurs when we *properly submit* to God and His designated authorities. *Freedom* happens when we pursue *moral purity*. *Suffering*, in light of God's grace for righteousness sake, yields *full forgiveness*. *Ownership* results in our *yielding rights* to God. Applied collectively, these six principles illuminate the principle of design, as we experience an increased understanding of our identity and how to find genuine fulfillment in life. Therefore, application of these six principles reveal God's "precise purposes for each person, object, and relationship which He established."

Examination of Gothard's writings, especially his twelve part series on principles of counseling (Gothard, 1993-1999), divulge a fairly precise depiction of his **doctrine of God** and his notions about **cosmology**. Gothard's theology begins by stressing the exclusiveness of God – "thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3)." God's nature is revealed, Gothard (1998, p. 5) explains, "by the names He has given Himself. ... He is the God who provides ... who heals ... leads to victory over the flesh, ... cleanses us and sets us apart for His work, ...the God who gives us peace, ... the God who is our righteousness, ...our shepherd, ... the God who is always present."

Sub sequentially, the ultimate life purpose "for everything God created is to glorify Him." Gothard (1998, p. 20) explains: "The chief purpose of mankind is to know God and to glorify Him forever. ... the goals of the believer should be to help as many as possible become rightly related to God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to grow in Godly character."

It is this life purpose and commitment to this life goal that shape our life calling and our life works. Our life serves, then, as a “written account ... a life message ... a treasure for future generations.” For God is the source of all creation. He created us in His image so that we could have fellowship with Him. God, explains Gothard (1995, p. 4), is “three Persons in One.” He formed us “out of the dust of the ground (body), and breathed into our nostrils the breath of life (spirit), and we became a living soul (soul).” Quoting 1 Thessalonians 5:23, that our “whole spirit and soul, and body be preserved blameless,” Gothard points out that our relationship to God is understood in the context of these three aspects of our being.

Gothard’s (1998, p.p. 2-32; 1993, p.p. 2-12; 1993, p.p. 6-8) **theological anthropology** and his notions of **harmartiology**, **soteriology**, **Christology**, and **pneumatology** are best understood in relationship to his thinking about the spirit, soul, and body of a person and the condition of a person’s heart. Gothard explains that the control center of human life and spiritual activity commences with the condition of a person’s heart (kardia). Our spirit (pneuma), “the home of conscience, faith, genuine love, wisdom, discernment, drive, creativity, joy and enthusiasm,” is directed by and influenced by the condition of the heart.⁵ A clean heart is one that is modeled after God’s unblemished heart as humanly demonstrated by the incarnate Christ. Our problems begin, however, when our spirit and eventually our soul (psuke), that is, our mind will and emotions, become directed by an unclean or sinful heart. Gothard elaborates:

The sin nature that Adam passed on to all of us has corrupted and defiled every heart that is conceived (except the heart of Jesus, because he was conceived by the Holy Spirit). Therefore, “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ... from birth, our natural desires are opposite to the will and ways of God ... In this condition we are under the wrath of God ... God is angry with the wicked everyday.

⁵ Gothard (1998, p.p. 3-32) identifies twelve (12) conditions of the heart that separate our spirit from God’s spirit. They include a wicked heart, double heart, foolish heart, hard heart, bitter heart, proud heart, deceitful heart, lean heart, unbelieving heart, whorish heart, deceived heart, and discouraged heart.

But a clean heart is possible, Gothard emphasizes, not by “the result of our own efforts” but by “the work of God.” For it is through “the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God cleanses our heart of sin. ... The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).” For an unblemished, spotless, blameless heart is only possible through the blood of Jesus Christ. Gothard stresses whereas the blood of Christ cleanses the heart, the Word (logos) of God cleanses the soul. Embracing God’s grace in Christ enables God to restore the spirit. Engrafting His word into our souls replaces the “pseudo-religious and pseudo-intellectual” mind-sets that have been so instrumental in separating us from true fellowship with God.

Gothard contends that critical to our salvation is how we confront guilt and address these strongholds, these “mind-sets and conclusions contrary to scripture,” that lead to the violations of God’s seven basic principles. Initially fostered by “natural curiosity, awakening of conscience, sensual focus, and the questioning of God’s word,” our inclination to violate God’s principles results in outward sin and a “violation of the conscience.” Too often, however, the sin, and the ensuing feelings of guilt that accompany it, are not dealt with immediate repentance (change), but with incomplete repentance – “sorrow over the consequence of sin but not over the sin itself.” Gone uncorrected, this unresolved sin produces a double mindedness (concupiscence). Gothard explains: “On one hand, the soul wants to be spiritual, but on the other hand, the soul wants to be sensual.” Left to fester, double mindedness eventually leads to the resolution of guilt by “compensation in religious activity – making up for sin by performing religious or humanitarian service, ... or by self-inflicted hardships.” The ensuing conflict, however, continues to persist in the soul. Ultimately, this profound inconsistency in beliefs can only be resolved by either embracing true repentance, that is, the confession of the sin and the changing

of one's way by embracing the truths of scripture, or by continuing to justify the sinful activity by "redefining morality" and ultimately reinterpreting scripture "to fit with the immorality."

The latter course of action, Gothard (1981, p.p. 114-116) points out, unfortunately results in reprobation. This condition of strong delusions deteriorates the spiritual system to the point "that it is not able to or does not wish to comprehend a heaven or hell or God." Energized by a "corrupt mind," the reprobate is apt to claim "that under grace we are free to do what we want." Trapped by an enslaved soul, the reprobate "despises submission, ... speaks evil of those in authority, ... scoffs at spiritual truths which are beyond human reasoning, ... complains about moral strictness, ... develops new and fashionable philosophies, ... argues irrationally over pseudo-philosophies that contradict God's word." Religion, therefore, for the reprobate, becomes a guise "to cover pride, lust, and rebellion."

Gothard (1981, p. 123) explains that integral to helping the reprobate change is teaching him/her to "walk in God's spirit." This walk commences when the reprobate receives Jesus Christ as one's personal savior -- "His spirit *indwells* in our life." Gothard elaborates. *Filling* his/her spirit with the spirit of God impacts "the inward parts of the soul" transforming it "into the "image of Christ." As the "Holy Spirit reveals thoughts, words, actions, or attitudes which need changing," a *testing*, "God's spirit versus our spirit," surfaces. Yielding to the Holy Spirit becomes essential, for if the human spirit prevails, "God's spirit is grieved and His effectiveness ... is quenched." *Resisting* temptation is possible, however, by reinforcing the Holy Spirit's direction with "precise Scriptural principles." *Spiritual maturity* will result "to the degree that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in resisting Satan with the Word of God."

Ecclesiology for Gothard (1981, p.p. 140- 153) encompasses helping parishioners take "basic steps toward becoming a whole person." The church must first proclaim God's good

news message of how “to be born again,” opening our spirit to the Spirit of God by confessing “Jesus as my Lord” asking Him “to come into my life and cleanse me of all my sin.” Next the church must show the parishioner how “to transform the soul.” Gothard explains: “Once we have been born again by the Spirit of God, we will continue to experience conflicting struggles in our mind, will, and emotions. But now the Spirit and the Word of God make it possible to ‘be transformed by the renewing of our minds’ (Romans 12:2).” Gothard points out that the church must help individuals “determine areas of personal character deficiency and find large sections of scripture relating to them.” We then are able to “rebuild thought structures” by memorizing “God’s thought structures ... saturating our minds with scripture, ... picturing each word and personalizing it to our circumstances,” asking God “to show us how to turn that word into action which will build Christian character and lead others to salvation.” Gothard makes clear that this process of transformation will refocus our emotions and redirect our goals moving us from cold and lukewarm Christians to Christians on fire for God. We will learn how to “express irritations, disappointments, and heartaches through scripture,” readily accepting that “God will allow certain situations in our lives to expose us to a wide spectrum of emotion” enabling us to “gain a wider sensitivity and insight into the nature of God and the feelings of others.” Because the church exists for the purpose of restoring the conditions of our heart to one that pleases God and the refurbishing of the soul by equipping it with God’s Word; therefore when we become restored and equipped, we can become “more like his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ,” and are thus better prepared to help those around us experience God’s love.

A review of Gothard’s writings reveals no direct reference to a specific view of the end times, that is, a clearly defined **eschatology**. But his writings, especially his notions of reprobation and the principle of success, suggest that there are specific consequences both in this

life and after death for being estranged from the spirit of God. Gothard (1990, p. 8) makes it clear, for example, that the reprobate “is one whose conscience is defiled. He believes wrong is right and that right is wrong. He speaks of freedom, yet he himself is the slave of his own degenerate nature. His mind is void of God’s truth and wisdom, yet he supposes himself to be wise as he pursues death.” But Gothard (1990, p. 3) also explains in his principle of success that “God conquered the world, the flesh and the devil through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.” Therefore, hope is even available for the reprobate, for freedom from sin can be obtained “by understanding and fully obeying the truth of Scripture.”

Psychological underpinnings.

In contrast to Jay Adams, Gothard makes no direct reference to psychology, other than to caution, that our counsel should help others avoid the psychological delusions of pseudo-intellectual philosophies and pseudo-religions that stem from human spirits or conditions of the heart not in tune with God’s Spirit. He also points out that the Greek word soul (*psuche*), from which the word psychology is derived, in scripture refers to the mind, will, and emotion of a person. Careful examination of Gothard’s writings, however, do uncover a strong resemblance to **behavioral psychologies**, especially cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Evidence that Gothard is most akin to cognitive-behavioral psychology is best illustrated in his notions of strongholds and the prescriptions he offers to conquer sinful habits. As defined previously, strongholds consist of well rehearsed “mind-sets contrary to Scripture.” Effective counseling, Gothard (1993, p.p. 10-12) contends, requires the “pulling down of strongholds” by “identifying wrong ideas ...clarifying wrong actions ... pointing out wrong emotions.” Effective counseling involves “explaining God’s commandments ... learning from God’s biographies ... revealing God’s ways.” Effective counseling leads others to “wise decisions,” helping them to

establish “daily disciplines,” preparing then to give “appropriate testimonies ... transforming problems into life messages.” Change occurs, Gothard (1990, p.p. 10-15) explains, when we “engraft scripture into our souls, ... mediating on it day and night, ... picture ourselves dead to the power and appeal to sin, ... making no provision for sinful habits, ... experience Christ’s victory over sin, ... being accountable to God-given authorities for victory, ... yielding self as instruments of righteousness to God.”

Spiritual underpinnings.

Similar to Jay Adams, Gothard will utilize any and all **spiritual resources** that are consistent with scripture. Most utilized however, by Gothard, is the study of, memorization, and meditation on scripture. Gothard (1981, p. 144) explains:

If we are to think God’s thoughts after Him, we must be able to comprehend and appreciate His structure of thinking as presented in Scripture. The best way to do this is to memorize whole thoughts and ideas from Scripture. ... Saturate your mind with scripture. ... Saturate your minds with God’s Word. ... It will wash out thoughts opposed to Scripture and will reconstruct other ideas around God’s principles.

For Gothard concludes, that it is through scripture that we are able to rebuild thought structures that will be consistent with God’s truth.

Gothard (1981, p.p. 124-128) also outlines in his writings the benefits of fasting. He contends that the practice of fasting will “increase spiritual alertness.” He explains: “Our ability to perceive God’s direction in life is directly related to our ability to sense the inner promptings of His Spirit. God provides a specific activity to assist us in doing this.” Elaborating, Gothard asserts how the suspension of eating and exercise increases the amount of blood available “for mental and spiritual concentration.” Fasting therefore, should be “combined with Scripture memorization and meditation” with a “focus on reaching specific spiritual objectives.” For example, we might want to use fasting to focus on “detecting temptation, conquering moral

impurity, discerning God’s will, identifying genuine love, and increasing spiritual growth.” The Christian leader too, would be encouraged to fast twenty-four hours prior to an important decision or the deliverance of an important message. Gothard concludes by explaining that fasting can be used for many purposes including: “to gain spiritual alertness to overcome temptation, to seek God’s will in a specific matter, fasting in repentance for sin, fasting for concern for the work of God, fasting for deliverance or protection, fasting to humble oneself before God, fasting as a part of worship, fasting when in deep sorrow.” For the purpose of fasting is to realize a “greater effectiveness in discerning and achieving God’s purposes.”

Gothard (1981, p.p. 171-172) insists that one of the most important purposes of a friendship is “to assist one another in developing Christ-like character qualities.” For to do so is in accord in what Gothard (1981, p. 151) describes as “God’s ultimate purpose.” We are to “become more and more like His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ” and to “reproduce His life in the lives of those around us.” For God’s purpose for us is spiritual maturity and that involves the development of **virtues** or **character qualities**. Gothard explains: Spiritual maturity “means building the principles of God’s Word into a person’s life so that he is equipped to understand and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit in knowing how to respond to any situation with Christ-like attitudes.” And to this end, Gothard identifies forty-nine (49) character qualities amplified by Scripture, with love, as defined in 1 Corinthians 13, being most prominent.

Robert McGee’s “Search For Significance” Model of Counseling

Theological underpinnings.

Four theological terms form the core of McGee’s (1998, p.p. 28-29) model of Christian counseling. They include *justification, reconciliation, propitiation, and regeneration*. McGee

explains that *justification* “means that God has not only forgiven me of my sins but has also granted me the righteousness of Christ.” Cloaked in Christ’s righteousness, “I am therefore *fully pleasing to the Father.*” *Reconciliation*, “means that although I was one time hostile toward God and alienated from Him, I am now forgiven and have been brought into an intimate relationship with Him.” For this reason, “I am *totally accepted by God.*” *Propitiation* “means that by His death on the cross Christ satisfied God’s wrath.” Consequently, “I am *deeply loved by God.*” *Regeneration* “means that I am a *new creation in Christ.*” Armed with this knowledge of scripture, the counselor can assist the counselee in either avoiding or if necessary, helping the counselee climb out of the mind traps of *performance, approval, blame, and shame*. Because our search for significance is rooted in *justification, reconciliation, propitiation, and regeneration*, McGee explains, people in Christ no longer “must meet certain standards to feel good ...be approved by certain others to feel good,” think of themselves as “unworthy of love” and deserving “to be punished,” nor erroneously conclude that they “cannot change,” or continue to harbor thoughts of hopelessness.

McGee’s (1994, 1998) writings imply a **doctrine of God** and **cosmology** that places God as the source of and at the center of all creation. Citing Psalms 139 as his source, McGee (1994, p.p. 45-49) claims that God knows us thoroughly, protects us, is always present, is a sovereign Creator, has a plan for us, and is constant and consistent. His writings also indicate a **theological anthropology** that purports a humanity that initially was in full fellowship with God.

McGee (1998, p. 13-14) explains:

The first created man lived in unclouded, intimate fellowship with God. He was secure and free. In all of God’s creation, no creature compared to him. Indeed, Adam was a magnificent creation, complete and perfect in the image of God, designed to reign over all the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). Adam’s purpose was to reflect the glory of God. Through man, God wanted to demonstrate His holiness (Ps. 99:3-5); love and patience (I Cor. 13:4); forgiveness (Heb. 10:17); faithfulness (Ps. 89:1, 2, 5, 8); and grace (Ps. 111:4).

Through his intellect, free will, and emotions, man was to be the showcase for God's glorious character.

But as McGee's **harmartiology** would express, humanities rebelliousness tarnished our fellowship with God, thereby incurring His wrath. Fortunately, however, McGee's (1998, p.p. 15-18) **soteriology** and high **Christology** gives hope for the removal of this tarnishment from our souls. He elaborates:

Though we justly deserve the wrath of God because of that deliberate rebellion, His Son became our substitute, and He experienced the wrath our rebellion deserves. Because Christ paid the penalty for our sins, our relationship with God has been restored, and we are able to partake of His nature and character, to commune with Him, and to reflect His love to all the world. Spread the good news! Man is not lost forever! God has not given up on us! He has bought us out of slavery to sin with the payment of Christ's death on the cross. Satan's rule can be broken, and we can reign with Christ. We can be restored to the security and significance for which we have been created—not simply in eternity but here and now as well.

McGee stresses, therefore that "we must never forget that God wants His children to bear His image and to rule with Him ... we can still have the privilege of fellowship with Him.

McGee explains that "God has provided the solution." The question that still remains, however, "*Will we accept Christ's death as the payment for our sins and discover the powerful implications of our salvation, or will we continue to follow Satan's lies and deceptions?*" Are we willing to "give up our own efforts to achieve righteousness" and instead, "believe that Christ's death and resurrection alone are sufficient to pay for our sin and separation from God?"

McGee emphasizes that saying yes to Christ by placing your trust in Him generates "many wonderful things" including:

All your sins are forgiven: past, present, and future. (Col. 2:13-14), You become a child of God. (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15), You receive eternal life. (John 5:24), You are delivered from Satan's domain and transferred into the kingdom of Christ. (Col. 1:13), Christ comes to dwell within you. (Col 1:27; Rev. 3:20), You become a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17), You are declared righteous by God. (2 Cor. 5:21), You enter into a love relationship with God. (1 John 4:9-11), You are accepted by God. (Col. 1:19-22).

But unfortunately, McGee concludes, far too many reject God's truth and "choose instead to believe Satan's lie." They continue "to reject God's truth and offer of salvation through Jesus Christ," choosing in its place to put their trust in "success and the opinions of others" to provide a sense of self-worth.

McGee's (1998, p. 53, p.p. 128-130) **pneumatology** emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is our source for change. The Holy Spirit "gives us encouragement, wisdom, and strength as we grow in our desire to honor the Lord." Regeneration, McGee explains, "is the renewing work of the Holy Spirit that literally makes each believer a new person at the moment trust is placed in Christ as Savior." McGee further clarifies that the Holy Spirit, "the third person of the trinity, is God and possesses all the attributes of deity." The Holy Spirit helps us focus on and glorify Christ as "He guides us into the truth of the Scriptures." The Holy Spirit enables us, by His power, to experience the "love of Christ" flowing through us "producing spiritual fruit within us." It is the power of the Holy Spirit that makes possible our "intimate friendship with Christ." It is the power of the Holy Spirit that produces "love for one another (John 15:12); joy and peace in the midst of difficulties (John 14:27; 15:11); steadfastness (Eph. 5:18-21); and evangelism and discipleship (Matt. 28:18-20)."

Review of McGee's writings does not reveal a specific **ecclesiology** nor a definitive **eschatology**. But one can surmise from his writings that the cornerstone of his view of church would emphasize the significance of *justification, reconciliation, propitiation, and regeneration* as an ongoing message to be continually echoed. Failing to do so, he would argue, will relinquish the parishioner to the lies of Satan, causing one to linger in a present hell fueled by the mind traps of *performance, approval, blame, and shame*. McGee (1998, p.p. 129-130) explains:

Just as the cross of Christ is the basis of our relationship with God, it is also the foundation of our spiritual growth. Christ's death is the supreme demonstration of God's

love, power, and wisdom. The more we understand and apply the truths of justification, propitiation, reconciliation, and regeneration, the more our lives will reflect His character. Spiritual growth is not magic. It comes as we apply the love and forgiveness of Christ in our daily circumstances. It comes as we reflect on the unconditional acceptance of Christ and His awesome power and choose to respond to situations and people in light of His sovereign purpose and kindness toward us.

For McGee (1998, p. 121) concludes, it is in these “four great doctrines” we learn to experience “the stable and secure identity we have in Christ ... experience His love, forgiveness, and power; and to express our appreciation of Him to others.” He further emphasizes that:

Because of justification, you are completely forgiven and fully pleasing to God. You no longer have to fear failure. Because of reconciliation, you are totally accepted by God. You no longer have to fear rejection. Because of propitiation, you are deeply loved by God. You no longer have to fear punishment; nor do you have to punish others. Because of regeneration, you have been made brand-new, complete in Christ. You no longer need to experience the pain of shame.

For it is with these “four great doctrines” that we undo and defeat the false beliefs perpetuated by Satan.

Psychological underpinnings.

The reviewed writings of McGee make no specific reference to psychology per se, but McGee’s notion of regeneration and his outline for change is very similar in content to **behavioral psychologies**, especially, cognitive-behavioral therapy.⁶ For example, McGee (1998, p.p. 149-150) writes: “For you to correct your thought process is hopeless unless you cooperate with God to release His power in your mind.” Change, he explains, requires us to ask God to “renew our mind.” Therefore, his approach, as would cognitive-behavioral therapy, emphasizes the importance of self-talk. But McGee explains that “renewing of the mind” involves more than self-talk. It is “more than repeating some words over and over. It is actually changing some of the thought patterns by which we have lived our entire lives.” If true change is to occur we must,

⁶ Note especially how McGee’s four primary false beliefs parallel the irrational notions as presented by Ellis and other cognitive-behavioral therapists. For example, see Ross (1994, p. 80).

McGee argues, agree with God that “we have been deceived ... we have been believing a lie and we need to repent for doing so.” We must allow God “to show us how destructive this lie has been in our lives.” We must choose “to reject the lie we have been believing so long and committing ourselves to believe what God says to be true.” We must be “willing to stand on the truth that God discloses to us about ourselves instead of using our normal responses.”

Spiritual underpinnings.

The underlying goal of McGee’s approach to Christian counseling is to bring about a spiritual change in the life of the counselee. McGee (1994, p.p. 192-221) recommends the usage of several **spiritual resources** especially *surrender, confession, forgiveness, prayer, meditation, scripture, restitution, service, and witnessing* as a means to achieve this purpose. *Surrender, confession, and forgiveness*, McGee (1994, p.p. 10-111) explains, entails a five step process that includes: *admitting* our powerlessness over sin and the *unmanageability* of life that it creates; *coming to believe* and trust in Christ as a means to alleviate and correct our sinful lifestyle; *choosing* to repent, by *deciding* to turn our will and life over to God through Christ; *taking inventory* of our past wrongs; and experiencing freedom through *confession* by admitting to God, ourselves and another person the exact nature of our sins. Coalesced, these five steps restore our relationship with God.

Continued growth in our relationship with God is accomplished through *prayer, meditation, and scripture*. For example in discussing prayer, McGee explains that “effective prayer” incorporates *praise, petition, thanksgiving, and confession*. *Praising* God helps to develop humility—“recognizing that we are people of infinite worth because God loves us, but we are not God.” *Petitioning* God reminds us that we need to ask Him for help instead of relying on our own volition. God wants to embrace “the concerns and burdens of your heart.”

Expressing *thanksgiving* – “showing gratitude for what God does for you,” this “attitude of gratitude” is a “wonderful replacement for bitterness and pride.” *Confessing* our sins to God in prayer encourages us to take inventory of ourselves and enables us to “experience forgiveness and renewed fellowship with God.”

McGee also encourages the incorporation of meditation into our daily routine.

Meditation—“spending time thinking about, contemplating, or pondering the things of God”—will produce “a clearer understanding of and deeper relationship with God.” In contrast to Eastern religions that encourage “emptying the mind of conscious thought,” McGee explains that Christian meditation encourages the filling of the mind with Scripture. McGee elaborates:

You will find the greatest value in meditating on Scripture. If possible, memorize the Scripture passage so you can recall it and reflect on it at any time. Focus your thoughts on certain parts of the passage as you create a mental picture. Reflect using all of your senses – seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching – as you do the activity. Ask questions about the passage, formulate answers to related problems or needs, and commit to apply or use what you have learned.

For McGee concludes, that Christian meditation “is both a mental and spiritual process of thinking, conversing, planning, anticipating, and reflecting.” Meditation is a means of “developing and enriching one’s spiritual devotion.”

McGee emphasizes that learning God’s word and then obeying it is also essential for our spiritual growth. For it is by our study of Scripture that we learn the “attributes of God, ... God’s commands, ... God’s promises, ... God’s warnings.” We must first learn God’s truths if we expect to begin applying His truths in our lives. When combined with prayer, meditation, and Bible study, these truths, McGee argues, will greatly enhance our relationship with God.

Spiritual growth is also enhanced by forgiving those who have wronged us and in making restitution or amends to those we have harmed or offended. Forgiveness of others necessitates “giving up our self-proclaimed right to blame, condemn, find fault, punish, and retaliate against

others.” *Restitution* involves asking those we have harmed or offended to forgive us and when possible, restoring to the person that which we lost or took away. *Service and witnessing* encompasses reaching out to others in need of God’s healing love and grace, being willing to testify how God has transformed your life. McGee explains:

An ambassador represents his or her country. In the same way, you represent the kingdom of God and the One who called you into the freedom you now experience. You have the privilege of sharing with others how they can become free. Helping others is, in part, the telling of a story. The story tells about our progress toward health through the power of Jesus Christ. ... Everyone needs the message that Jesus Christ is the answer to the sin problem.

Character development or the obtainment of **Christian virtues** is also an integral ingredient of McGee’s model of counseling. Character defects for the most part, according to McGee, are rooted in the erroneous mind-sets that generate a “fear of failure,” a “fear of rejection,” “fear of punishment and the compulsion to punish others,” and underlying unresolved shame about oneself. Unfortunately, if gone uncorrected, these Satanic mind-sets will destroy or at a minimum block the development of Christian virtues. Instead, they will foster:

perfectionism, avoiding risks, anger, resentment, pride, depression, low motivation, sexual dysfunction, chemical dependency, addiction to success, identity entangled with success, sense of hopelessness, anger at ourselves and God, ... being easily manipulated, codependency, avoiding people, negative messages, hypersensitivity to the opinions of others, hypo-sensitivity, ... self-induced punishment, bitterness, passivity, punishing others, fears of all sorts, ... inferiority, habitually destructive behavior, self-pity, isolation and withdrawal, loss of creativity, despising our appearance.

However, McGee emphasizes that this despair is avoidable, if we are only willing to incorporate into our thinking the good news message offered by *justification, reconciliation, propitiation, and regeneration*.

Kenneth Haugk's Christian Care Giving Model of Counseling

Theological underpinnings.

A core assumption underlying Haugk's (1984, p.p. 19-21) "care giving" model of Christian counseling centers on his assertion that God is the ultimate "cure giver," whereas we are simply the care giver. He explains:

The apostle Paul knew this. In I Cor. 3:6-7 he wrote, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." As a farmer's responsibility rests with preparing a crop for harvest, so the Christian caregiver's responsibility is to "plant" and "water." God then provides the growth. In other words, *Christians are responsible for care; God is responsible for cure.*

Haugk points out that when a caregiver realizes "that God is the Cure giver," it eliminates "worry and false expectations." Focus then shifts from getting results to concentrating on "creating the best therapeutic situation for growth to occur: developing trust and communicating acceptance and love."

Underlying Haugk's core assumption is a **doctrine of God** and a **cosmology** that asserts the universe was created by a caring God to whom we can call upon in times of trouble and rejoice with in good times. Haugk (2000, p.p. 66-76) uses various scripture references to portray a God who "cares about us in our grief ... has overcome death, shares our grief with us ... knows what it is like to have a loved one die." He presents a God "who is with us and comforts us ... knows the pain and fear of death ... stays with us in our dying." He describes a God "who is always with us ... who cares for us when we are ill ... cares about our needs and can provide for them, ... a God who gives us peace, wisdom ... and still loves us after all we have done." He depicts a God of "mercy and forgiveness" who "values us highly," a God who knows rejection, betrayal and understands anger. He puts forth the picture of a God that people "need and long for," a God who can deliver us from our human condition.

But unfortunately, all of humanity does not currently experience a caring relationship with a loving God. Haugk (1984, p.p.50-51) explains:

Created by God, people necessarily live their lives in relationship to God. Relationships with God vary significantly among individuals and across time. Some individuals are angry with God and alienated from him, at least part of the time. Others have a relationship that can most kindly be characterized as cool or distant. Still others experience a close relationship with God—finding meaning, purpose, value, and dignity in that relationship. Yet even these people, bonded to God like a child to a parent, find themselves gripped by questions that go to the very heart of their existence:

“What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? How does God view me? What is right, and what is wrong? Why does God allow suffering? Why must I die?” These key questions cut to the center of a person’s “genuine spiritual needs.” They cannot be ignored, Haugk contends, for “they are part of the flow of human life.”

Haugk’s (1984, p. 65) **harmartiology** acknowledges that sin produces a “brokenness and separation from God.” This “fragmentation destroys families, friendships, and individuals.” Sin erects a wall that alienates us “from others and seals off hope for reconciliation.” Haugk’s **soteriology** and **Christology**,⁷ however, present a message of hope. He explains:

Into the shattered remains of God’s perfect creation comes the message that Jesus Christ brings the gift of wholeness to anyone able to accept it. It is the gift of salvation won by Christ’s death and resurrection and received through faith that has torn down the separating wall of sin and restored our relationship with God. The Greek word for “to save” (*sodzo*) also means “to heal” and “to make whole.” It is a gift of life offering to make people whole forever, beginning right now. It is this salvation, this healing, that takes broken, shattered lives and recreates them infinitely “better than new.

Haugk readily admits that “human beings constantly fall short of God’s expectations. All have faults, failings, and imperfections that repeatedly cause us to fall before God and say with the prodigal son, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be

⁷ Haugk’s (1984, p. 118) Christology especially portrays Jesus as the incarnate son of God. He explains: “The Bible relates how God sent his Son Jesus to become a human being so that he could bring love, healing, hope, forgiveness, and new life to the world.”

called your son” (Luke 15:21). But he offers encouragement when he reminds us that “one of the richest resources of the Christian faith is the surprising gift of forgiveness that God offers us through Jesus Christ. God freely offers forgiveness to everyone. Christians throughout the ages have found special comfort and renewed life in the promise of forgiveness.”

Haugk explains that “God shares this message of forgiveness through his people.” His **ecclesiology** therefore, stresses the need for the church to be a place where people can experience God’s forgiveness and God’s love. “As members of the body of Christ,” he writes, “Christians have Jesus’ command to extend God’s gracious offer of forgiveness to one another (John 20:23).” For it is through the church and its membership, that the care and love of God is conveyed to others. And it is through specially trained lay people⁸ within the congregation that the care and love of God can be greatly enhanced and be readily dispersed to people in need of it. But Haugk’s (1984, p. 35) pneumatology stresses “the message of God’s love grips Christians” as “we are filled by the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit “moves clay-footed Christians to use our God-given gifts for others. He makes cared-for Christians into caring Christians.”

Review of Haugk’s writings indicates no particular viewpoint with regards to **eschatology**. While acknowledging the inevitability of death and the theological and spiritual questions that it presents, Haugk’s writings present no definitive position on the study of last things, the end of the world, or the nature of life after death.

Psychological underpinnings.

Haugk (1984, p.p. 45-49) is quick to point out how his “care giving counseling” is unique and significantly differs from psychological approaches to counseling. He explains:

⁸ Haugk calls these specially trained lay persons Stephen ministers. They undergo fifty (50) hours of training designed to produce skilled, trustworthy, compassionate caregivers who can convey to people in need, through the sharing of their faith in Christ, the care and love of God.

Disciples of Sigmund Freud often claim that the only real, non-superficial way to diagnose and treat the individual is to employ psychoanalytic perspectives and techniques: that is, investigating the unconscious, focusing on childhood, dream analysis, and free association. “We know where the action is,” they seem to say. “It’s infantile sexuality, libido, the Oedipus complex, and ego defense mechanisms. If you are unwilling to tackle the problem at those depths, you’re just playing around.”

Further commenting he writes:

While the Freudian system does have value, and in many ways is indeed a deep system, when compared to the uniquely Christian system of caring for the individual, it is quite superficial. Infantile sexuality and libido do not seem so deep next to the basic questions and concerns of life, death, spirituality, and meaning. These latter issues reach down to the deepest level of our beings—beyond the unconscious. ... The same applies to a number of psychological systems: Rogerian, Behavioral, Gestalt, Rational-Emotive, Transactional Analysis, and Neo-Analytic to name a few. I believe each of these systems has a unique and valuable contribution to make. Nevertheless, these approaches appear quite superficial when compared to the unique Christian perspective.

Haugk reminds his reader that Christian care giving differs from psychological approaches because it can touch the spiritual depths that psychology cannot. He emphasizes that it has only been in the last fifty to seventy five years that “emphasis has shifted from a theological to a psychological basis for “Christian” caring and counseling.” Christians, he argues, “need to recover something that they once possessed, but recently lost: theology as the primary source out of which caring and counseling flows.” For Haugk concludes: “Psychology, sociology, and medicine cannot give the entire answer to the human condition. There is a significant gap left for theology, and it behooves Christians, both clergy and lay, not to disavow their authority, but to step in and fill that gap.”

Haugk (2000, p. 677) contends that we must fill this gap with “gospel-centered caring” that helps people develop a “loving, trusting relationship with God.” Gospel-centered caring, Haugk explains, recognizes that “God alone builds this relationship” especially “through the presence, prayers, witness, and care of Christian caregivers.” Recognizing first “what Jesus has done for the care receiver and what the Holy Spirit continues to do,” the “gospel-centered

caregiver” also acknowledges what God has done for them. Motivated then “by a sense of gratitude,” they are able to communicate God’s grace, inviting “others to experience God’s incredible goodness in Jesus.” Armed with a willingness to share their own vulnerability and their need for God’s grace, these gospel-centered caregivers are able to convey to others “how God’s love gives strength, hope, and courage to people in whatever circumstances they face.”

Although Haugk is insistent that his “Christian care giving model” differs significantly from psychological approaches to counseling, none the less, a careful review of his notions reveals a marked similarity to humanistic psychologies, especially client-centered therapy as presented by Carl Rogers. This is especially evident when he introduces such notions as empathy and genuineness as a means to build the counseling relationship and stresses the importance of active listening as a primary source to accomplish counseling goals.⁹

Spiritual underpinnings.

Providing “spiritual care” is one of the cornerstones of Haugk’s (2000, p.p. 659-995) model of counseling. For it is important as Christians that we help people “hear and believe that God loves them.” Haugk explains: “People ... need special care for spiritual pain, understand better the reasons for those spiritual needs, and know even how to give and receive spiritual care.” Growth in faith also occurs as we understand better our needs “for spiritual care and the resources you can turn to for help.” These **spiritual resources** may include reading biblical stories, recalling biblical promises, prayer, meditation, fasting, journaling, worship, participating in the sacraments, confession, forgiveness, absolution, and fellowshiping with other Christians.

⁹ In fairness to Haugk, it is important to emphasize that his model is designed to be implemented by lay persons. Therefore, usage of a non-directive approach that stresses active listening may best serve his purpose and help avoid ethical and legal entanglements that might emerge in using other more directive approaches.

These spiritual growth enhancers, these “conduits of grace,” help people to become “aware of God’s presence.” They help reduce worry by *increasing faith*, recognizing and believing that “God is caring for us.” They *generate hope* as we learn to be more positive knowing that “God is in charge.” They improve our *ability to love* as we learn to “care for those in need.” They *generate an attitude of gratitude* as our growing knowledge of God’s love for us helps us to be more open to God’s grace. *Repentance and humility emerge* as we are now able “to freely admit our faults and turn away from our sins when we become aware of them.” Christian community becomes important. “We love and *serve others*,” sharing “what God has given,” learning to *seek guidance* from fellow Christians. These spiritual outcomes show evidence of God’s grace working in our lives.

Christian character traits of gratitude and humility emerge as we demonstrate to others God’s love in our sharing of our faith and hope in Christ. Armed with the power of God through Christ, we can help others confront the circumstances of “ignorance, oppression, suffering, shame, despair, and evil” that prevent them and us from fully experiencing God’s love. Our example serves to help the non-believers brazen out their choice of “refusing to believe,” assisting them in facing their “anger with God” or their “unwillingness to forgive.” Our encouragement in Christ motivates them to meet head on their idolatrous thoughts and sinful desires that produce the pride and guilt that distract them from truly appreciating God’s love, or discourage them from fully participating in a Christian community of faith. As we demonstrate to others our spiritual growth by sharing how God’s grace and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit has changed our lives, our Christian witness assists others in overcoming their “choices and circumstances” that have circumvented their encounter with a loving God, and have deprived them from experiencing the sweet fruit that stems from abiding in Christ.

Summary

In this chapter an examination has been undertaken to show how four different authors of Christian models of counseling have employed theological, psychological, and spiritual constructs in their writings. The “nouthetic” model of Christian counseling, as introduced by Jay Adams, has been reviewed. The “basic life principles model” of Bill Gothard has been inspected. A scanning of the “search for significance” approach offered by Robert McGee has been completed. The “Christian care giving” model of Kenneth Haugk has been looked at.

The results of this intensive inquiry reveal that each writer has expounded a theological anthropology that clearly depicts a humanity separated from, alienated, and estranged from God our creator. Each author has presented a theological solution to humanity’s predicament that minimally embraces the importance of allowing the love of God demonstrated in Christ to enter our lives. Each essayist has emphasized the importance of scripture and prayer as essential spiritual tools for spiritual growth. Each has either directly or indirectly alluded to the importance of challenging unbiblical notions or mind-sets contrary to scripture as an important ingredient to foster spiritual growth and to produce a permanent change in the condition of our heart. Each has shown how their respective model Christian counseling moves beyond the precepts of psychology. By skillfully arguing that it requires the embracement of theological notions to tackle the ultimate problems of life and death, each has seriously questioned the appropriateness of psychology’s attempt to address such issues. Each has proposed that our ultimate concern should center on sharing with others, through our words and deeds, the love of God in Christ that dwells within us and the fruit of the spirit that such love so bountifully produces.

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