

So Phil, whenever you find it difficult to show love, remember that it was not easy for God either."

"I've always wanted to be the head of my home, but I've never known how to begin."

"And I've wanted him to assume the responsibilities of headship." [41]

"Well, in the assignments that I shall give you, there will be plenty for you to do that will give you a good start this week. Now Emily, while God does not require love of you as the essence of your role in the home, He does insist upon submission: 'As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything' (Eph. 5:24). Now let me explain what this means. I think that you are going to discover that there are some surprises connected with this command. As a matter of fact, the road to fulfillment that we hear so much about today lies in this valley. To begin with. . ."

You have read enough to know that there is hope. Phil and Emily are just two of the thousands who this year will find help for their marriage from truly Christian counseling. [42] How about your marriage . . . has it begun to turn sour, too? There is hope. But that hope can be found nowhere but in Christ. If you do not know Christ as your Savior [43], or if you would like to learn more about biblical solutions to marriage and other life problems, contact the person who gave you this folder or write to the address imprinted in the space below. Further help may be found in the book *Christian Living in the Home* by Jay Adams.

Appendix 1 Notes

1. Jay E. Adams, *What Do You Do When Your Marriage Goes Sour?* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1975). This sold about 350,000 copies in the next fifteen years. Reprinted by permission.

2. Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

3. Jay E. Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1972), 10-13.

4. Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (USA: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1973), 103-347; contains Adams's most detailed exposition of his counseling methodology.

[41] Adams could presume of his readership that these sentiments, odd-sounding as they are to many modern readers, were genuine in many of his target population of counselees. Both domineering and doormat wives faced frank challenge and instruction. He also vigorously prosecuted the egalitarian model that eliminated role distinctions. The "surprises" about wifely submission that he alludes to later in the paragraph came from his reading of Proverbs 31:10ff as a paradigm of female fulfillment.⁹

[42] A jab at evangelical psychotherapists, whom Adams saw as "Christians who counsel," not necessarily as "truly Christian counselors."

[43] Adams's counseling presumed that evangelism was an integral ingredient of counseling. According to the logic of his system, the counselor did not represent the counselee's interests in abstraction from God but represented God's interests to the counselee, which were ultimately in the counselee's best interests.

5. Ibid., 277ff. Adams engaged in a lengthy polemic against the authorities in contemporary pastoral counseling—Carl Rogers, Seward Hiltner, Rollo May, et al.—for their nondirective therapies.

6. "Whenever I speak of 'guilt' . . . I mean 'liability to punishment,' not the unpleasant feelings that may accompany it." Jay E. Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving: Discover the Path to Biblical Forgiveness* (USA: Victor Books [Scripture Press], 1989), 161.

7. Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (USA: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970), 94.

8. Ibid., 148-51; Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 118-24.

9. Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*, chapter 6.

APPENDIX 2

Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling (1988)

Abstract: The contemporary biblical counseling movement faces six crucial issues. One issue concerns our foundation; the other five concern how we build on that foundation. First, the "same old issues" that we always have addressed remain lively issues in the contemporary world. Second, the questions of motivation must be addressed in the same detail with which biblical counseling has addressed questions of behavior. Third, we need to clarify the ways in which human responsibility and suffering relate to one another. Fourth, many elements in the counselor-counselee relationship need to be better understood and practiced. Fifth, biblical counseling needs to interact with a wider audience. Sixth, we need to develop the nuances in our view of secular psychology.

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The Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation celebrates its twentieth anniversary in 1988. CCEF's anniversary is a symbolic anniversary for the entire nouthetic-biblical counseling movement. An anniversary is a time to take stock. Where have we come from? Where are we? What issues that now face us will determine our future?

I have identified six crucial issues facing contemporary biblical counseling. These six are not the only issues. They are, however, the issues I believe merit the adjective "crucial." If we address them, we will grow in wisdom. If we neglect them, we will stagnate or even distort the counsel of God. I have attempted to look at contemporary biblical counseling (both our articulated theory and our run-of-the-mill practice) in the light of Scripture. Each issue is an issue both of theory and of practice. How do we think about people biblically? How do we counsel them biblically?

1. The "same old issues" still face us

The first issue is an old one. The problems that animated biblical counseling at its start remain live problems today. Counseling in the Christian church continues to be significantly compromised by the secular assumptions and practices of our culture's reigning psychologies and psychiatries. Biblical-nouthetic counseling was initiated to provide two things: a cogent critique of secularism and a distinctly biblical alternative. The traditional insights, strengths, and commitments of nouthetic

counseling must be maintained. Biblical counseling operates within the worldview of the Bible, with the Bible in hand. It is centered on God even (especially!) when it thinks about man. It is centered on Jesus Christ, who became a man in order to save us. It is centered in the midst of Christ's people, who are called to pray for one another and to counsel one another in love.

Secular psychologies remain major competitors with the church. We face a zoo of systems united by only one thing. At best, "god" is a comforting auxiliary to the human psychic drama. At worst, he/she/it is a delusion. Lacking God, the human problem (and the power to understand and to solve that problem) is perceived to lie somewhere within or between human beings. Christ died for nothing.

The enemy was not only out there somewhere. "We have met the enemy . . . and they are us," Pogo once remarked. Secular psychological modes of thinking continue to inhabit the church of the living God. Witness the rampant self-esteem and need psychologies that bypass the man-God relationship in order to make the human psyche the place "where the action is." The living God is shriveled into an actor within an all-important psychic drama. Witness the church hiring essentially secular psychologists, referring to and deferring to their "wisdom" for solving "personal problems" and "relationship and lifestyle issues." Witness an ongoing intellectual confusion and eclecticism that pursues truth in some blend of secular psychology and biblical Christianity. We must continue to provide a distinct alternative in both the content and practice of counseling.

Biblical counseling must reaffirm and finely tune its distinctive intellectual content. We must continue to think biblically, letting biblical categories lead our understanding. We must continue to reject secular categories from a self-consciously presuppositional standpoint. The climate of schol-

arly opinion has not changed drastically. The same old pattern of rehashing ideas and practices of secular psychology continues in the books, journals, schools, seminaries, and professional organizations of the Christian counseling world.

Biblical counseling must also continue to reaffirm and develop its counseling methods. We must continue to develop counseling as Christian ministry—intended to produce conviction of sin, the joyous reception of Jesus Christ, and renewal of life. Biblical counseling must continue to repudiate the notion of a "counseling profession" disconnected both structurally and intellectually from the nurture, instruction, love, discipline, authority, and friendship of the body of Christ. The patterns of professional practice have not changed drastically. Christian clones of secular methods continue to dominate the practice, no less than the literature, of the Christian counseling world.

Does this mean that nothing has changed in twenty years? I do not think so. In a number of ways 1988 is more opportune than 1968 for a message of presuppositionally consistent counseling to be heard. The intellectual climate has changed. Thomas Kuhn and other secular philosophers of science have made presuppositional modes of thought common intellectual currency among Christians and non-Christians alike. The ground has been cut away that makes psychology and psychiatry seem like neutral, objective scientific truth. Under the "all truth is God's truth" slogan, with its notion that both Science and the Bible were revelational, cartloads of undiluted secularism were hauled into the church. But now the sciences have lost much of their pretense to objectivity. Christians of various stripes also have made presuppositional styles of thinking common. Francis Schaeffer introduced the evangelical reading public to a generally presuppositional mode of thought. C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, and Harry

Blamires expounded in charming fashion the idea that we should "think Christianly." Paul Vitz and William Kirk Kilpatrick have been widely read and applauded for their crisp analyses of secular psychology's covert religious character. None of the above has articulated the biblical counseling alternatives as clearly as he has diagnosed or hinted at the failings of secularism. But all the above have plowed the ground. The message of biblical counseling, restated for contemporary hearers, may well fall on more receptive ears.

It is not redundant to call Christians to be radically biblical. Many ears still attend to the persuasive voice of secular psychology. It is not redundant to call Christians to be exegetically biblical. The Bible abounds in riches yet to be mined and applied to counseling. It is not redundant to call Christians to be biblical in practice as well as in thinking. Biblical counseling is an expression of church life. The equipping and overseeing work of the pastors and the one-anothering of the rest of the body of Christ are intrinsically counseling activities.

This first crucial issue restates where we have stood for the past twenty years. The five crucial issues that follow are newer issues. These are areas where our grasp of what it means to be biblical must be significantly extended. Issue 1: hold fast to the foundation. Issues 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 build on that foundation.

We have had twenty years to show our strengths—and our weaknesses. An honest self-assessment reveals a number of questions, shortcomings, or growing pains we need to face as a movement. But the implications of this first crucial issue must be felt throughout the discussion that follows. Whatever changes and development need to occur within the biblical counseling movement must occur only on the foundation already laid: biblical categories of thought generating biblical methods of ministry.

2. The questions touching on human motivation must be explored and integrated more firmly within both our theory and practice

Nouthetic counseling has uniquely comprehended that the goal of counseling should be nothing less than visible obedience to the Lord. No other counseling system perceives that this is the central issue facing troubled, sinful, and suffering human beings. The counseling world around us (Christian and non-Christian alike) is agog with speculations about human motivation. Biblical counseling has rightly stressed behavior—love and good works—as the simple and accessible evidence of true change.

Biblical counseling must walk a fine line, however. There is patent "danger to the left of us." Speculative psychological systems pretend to an analytic insight into the motivations of the human heart. Biblical counseling has been rightfully suspicious of psychodynamic explanations. Purely mythical constructs like id, ego, and super ego are reified. Self-esteem or "needs" become the magic crucible from which all human life flows. My "self-talk" is invested with supreme power to determine the course of my life. Our wariness at such pseudo-explanations perhaps carries over (illegitimately) into a wariness toward the whole subject of motivation.

Those to the left forget that the dynamics of the human psyche have to do with God! Always. Without exception. There is no "psychodynamic," no motivation pattern, independent of what people are doing with God. Human psychology is theological because human beings are with-respect-to-God creatures. The prime action is in the man-God relationship, not in an encapsulated psyche whose component parts relate to one another according to some supposed pattern. What goes on in the psyche expresses and registers man-with-God

dynamics, not some supposedly independent psychic structure, conflict, or need.

But we who are sensitive to danger on the left, to rank speculation about the motives and motivational structure of the human heart, often forget there is "danger to the right of us" as well. We depart from the Bible if we ignore motives and drift toward an externalistic view of man. The caricature that we are behavioristic may indeed be true more often than we would like to admit. The Bible itself tells us behavior has reasons.

Behavior flows "from within, out of men's hearts" (Mark 7:21). There is an internal cause of interpersonal conflict (James 4:1f); the varied works of the flesh express inner cravings (Gal. 5:15-21); every kind of evil roots in misplaced affections (1 Tim. 6:10). This we all know and affirm. But both our theory and practice have not given this area the attention it needs. We must become as familiar with the practical, everyday details of faith and idolatry as we are with the details of those acts of sin and righteousness, which flow, from our hearts. The changes for which biblical counseling must aim are both internal and external.

I am not saying that there is a fatal defect within existing biblical counseling. Our problem is a lack of emphasis and articulation. We already have a first approximation of the biblical view of motivation in Jay Adams's "feeling or desire orientation versus commandment orientation." He has perceptively described the two-sided, basic structure in biblical fashion. But there is a wealth of detail to fill in. Filling in that detail will make us realize that motivational issues play a far more prominent role than we have realized, both conceptually and in counseling practice.

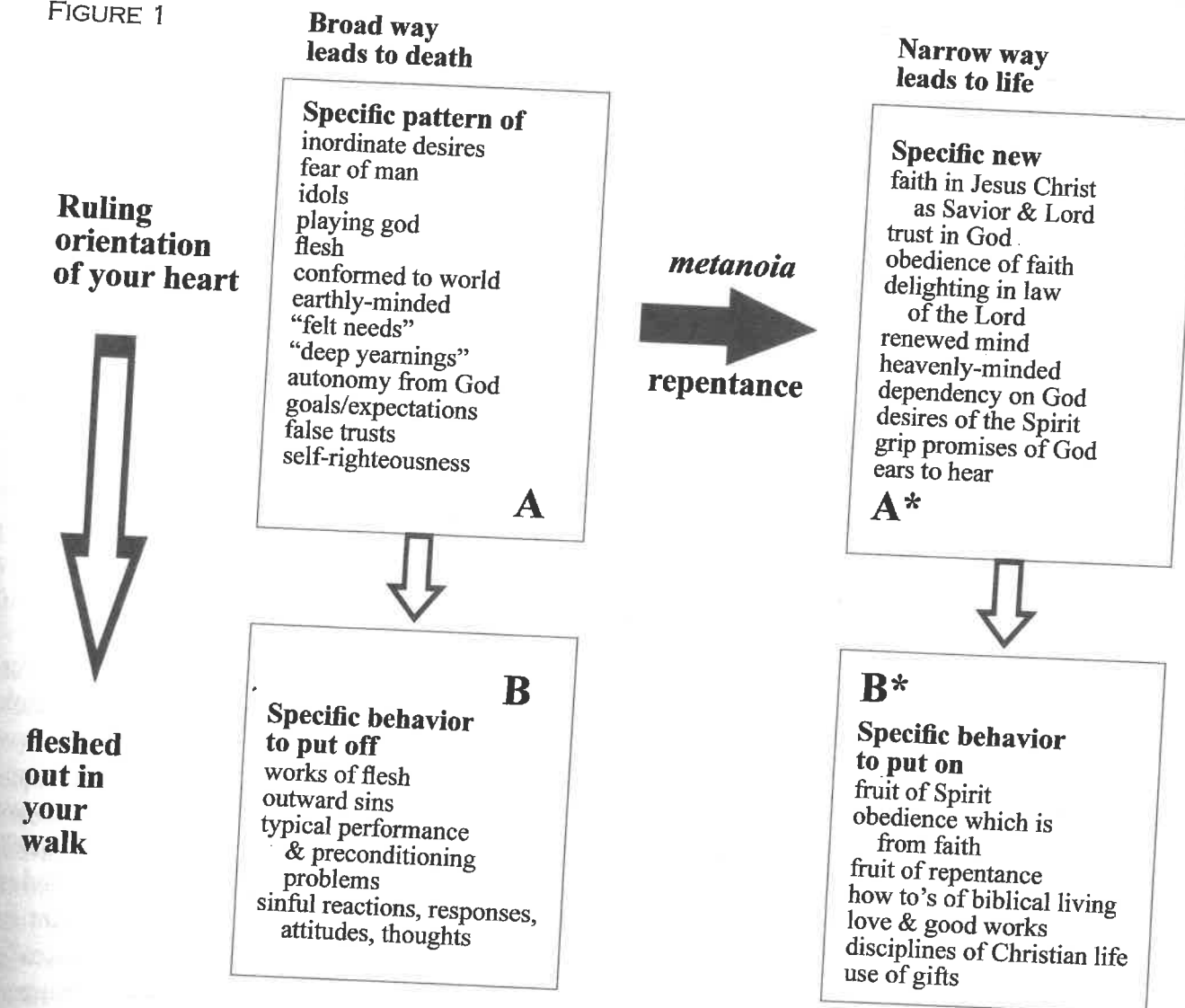
Attending to this area will change the way we think about people and the way we counsel: nothing will be lost, but much will be gained. I believe that we will linger in areas we now rush over in our counseling. Picture to yourself an artist's rep-

resentation of a human being that is a collage of photographic snapshots and charcoal sketches. We biblical counselors have photographic likenesses, in living color, of the hands, feet, and tongue. We know the terrain in some detail, hence we feel comfortable attending to these areas in our counseling. But we have only a rough charcoal sketch of the head and heart, so we quickly run out of issues to explore and things to say.

Figure 1 portrays the structure of biblical change. Heart leads to walk. Idolatry leads to disobedience; faith leads to obedience. Change of heart leads to change of walk. Every visible sin roots in a far more massive invisible sin. What is the change biblical counseling aims for? $B \rightarrow B^*$ is rank moralism: "do's and don'ts." $AB \rightarrow A^*$ is pietism: "Let go and let God." $B \rightarrow A^*B^*$ is a subtler error. The put-off (B), put-on (B^*), and faith in Jesus Christ (A^*) are all present. But the structure of false faiths (A) is neglected. This is the configuration into which I fear nouthetic counselors too often drift. We fail to minister the full inner impact of the conviction of sin. Hence the desperateness of our need for Jesus Christ is weakened. Hence the renewal of mind and heart by the promises of God is practically downplayed. We become incipiently moralistic. Biblical change is $AB \rightarrow A^*B^*$. The inordinate, swarming desires of the flesh are treated in the same detail as the works of the flesh, the simple desires of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the fruit of the Spirit. Our instinctive orientation to inordinate desires and false beliefs yields to our orientation to Christ's mercies and wise will.

Is our current view of motivation inaccurate or unbiblical? No, but many sordid and gorgeous details must be seen and understood for the whole-picture of man to take on flesh. At the very least, attending to the motivation issues will transform Adams's "presentation, performance, and preconditioning levels" of problem analysis. A fourth dimension, an enriched "desire versus

FIGURE 1



commandment orientation," will be systematically woven in as fundamental to the other three. People often present a stew of problems: anger, desires, frustrations, fears, immorality, confusion, defensiveness, cruelty, interpersonal disasters, instability, misery, substance abuse, and anxiety. These defy simple categorization on a behavioral problem list! But such a confusing stew can be tied, item after item, to organizing themes in a person's life. The Scriptures present many such themes: pride, the fear of man, mammon, the desires of the

flesh, idolatry, trust in man, and so forth. Biblical counselors need to learn to think thematically about the heart. When we do not think about characteristic motivations, the counselee's "relationship with God" tends to be approached chiefly through outward disciplines: devotional life, church attendance, and the like. When we do address the motivational issues biblically, the counselee's relationship with God becomes a counseling issue we can get our hands on. "Trust in the Lord" (that most generic and abused piece of wonderful counsel!)

comes to life against the backdrop of specific false trusts. Usually "trust in the Lord" is vague and ineffectual because it is tossed like some Season-all into the stew of a person's life. Counselees in effect trust the Lord to give them their ruling desires, without ever repenting in depth of those desires. But "trust the Lord *instead of* trusting in . . ." does work because it is biblical.¹ It has the concrete two-sidedness of biblical repentance and mind renewal.

Biblical counselors can say, "Bill, you became angry at Sally, got depressed, barked at your boss, and then took drugs because you were absolutely ruled by wanting your own way—with Sally and with everything else." Counseling typically should deal in detail then with the question, What rules Bill? What particular desires, expectations, fears, and beliefs controlled his response to his life situation? His relationship with God—and with his false gods—would become the stuff of concrete counseling that tackles the heart. Counseling at this point is strongly interpretive, helping Bill to make sense out of the welter of problematic actions, words, thoughts, and attitudes that characterize his life. Conviction of sin will land him squarely before God as a repentant idolater, as well as an angry, depressed substance abuser prepared to change. As he truly understands himself and Christ's grace, the necessary behavioral changes will make sense from the inside.

We waste our breath (and precious truths) if we first talk about biblical ways to control anger, counteract depression, communicate with one's wife, show proper work attitudes, and restructure one's life to eliminate drug addiction. Those should come second as the fruit of repentance. How many times we would-be biblical counselors waste our breath because we do not deal well with motivation problems. Biblical counselors must look carefully for the "false gods" if we are to minister the first great commandment and the

promises of God as concretely as we minister the second great commandment.

In conclusion, it seems to me that critics of nouthetic counseling have been right in discerning a gap, or at least relative inattention, in our treatment of motivation. Their alternatives to our lack have been so appalling that we perhaps might feel excused for not heeding their criticism. I propose that we hear their criticism, in addition to avoiding their alternatives. Or perhaps it is truer to say, I propose that we hear the Scripture. Our critics criticize in order to dismiss us. Scripture admonishes to mature us. We need not fear the biblical alternative, of course. The categories we are not yet using well are *biblical* categories.

3. The relationship between human responsibility and human suffering needs a great deal of clarification

Crucial issue 1 established our foundation for faith and practice. Crucial issue 2 made us rethink the nature of biblical change. Crucial issue 3 now challenges us to rethink our vision of the counselee and the counselee's situation. How do we see and understand the people whom we counsel? What kind of attention do we pay to the kind of world the counselee inhabits? How important are the counselee's past and present circumstances?

One of the most refreshing characteristics of nouthetic counseling has been its affirmation of human responsibility. The counseling world, Christian and non-Christian alike, concocts elaborate systems that rationalize sin by making people fundamentally victims determined by forces outside their control. Contemporary victim theories abound, whether operating under psychological, medical, sociological, or Christian aegis. All such theories rob people of moral responsibility and insert some determinism at the foundation of human life. Biblical counseling has resisted

seeing people as determined—whether by heredity, the sins of others, organic imbalances, poor models, unmet needs, mental forces imposing on us as "illness," or demonic inhabitants.

In attacking notions of "man as victim," biblical counseling has reaffirmed the biblical notion of human responsibility. In most graphic terms, on the day of judgment God will ask, "What did you do?" He will not ask, "What happened to you?" Nouthetic counseling has gone on to deal forthrightly with the omnipresent human tendency to rationalize, to portray oneself as a victim whose problems and sins are someone or something else's fault. Victim theories ground our sins in our pain and our "needs." Let sins be derivative, and some other problem primary, and people will not need Jesus Christ. In Christian guise, Jesus becomes a need-meeter who makes victims feel better, not a Savior who purchases sinful men for God with his own blood.

We have been wary of any emphasis on man as victim, for every version around is tainted by sin's aversion to acknowledging sin. All this said, we still need to appreciate and clarify the many ways people are sufferers—and fully responsible—if we are to be faithful to the perfect fit between the Bible and human life. We have made a strong affirmation of human responsibility: the role of the flesh. We have not discussed as fully the impact of the world and the devil as they master and shape human life. We have mined and processed certain biblical riches; there are other riches that we have not scrutinized as closely.

There is a *biblical* view of man as a sufferer. We can say it even more plainly: There is a biblical view of man as a victim. Biblical counseling has been repeatedly misunderstood to say that all problems are a result of personal sin. Why the misunderstanding? Surely we have talked about the role of Satan, for example in Job's situation. Surely nouthetic literature and practice take seriously that people are sinned against, abused,

criticized, tempted, or rejected. What about the impact of other general hardships of life: poverty, injustice, physical disabilities, allergies, sickness, and bereavement? Of course.

Because nouthetic counseling is sensitive to the Scripture, none of these areas has been wholly neglected. It at least has been implicit that man is both responsible and a sufferer. We are guilty and victims. Some of the misunderstanding of biblical counseling is caricature, from people who know all too well that "man is responsible" would undermine their whole counseling theory and practice. Some of the misunderstanding comes from people who simply do not understand that the gospel underlies biblical change. They think "man is responsible" would legitimate judging people and nagging them into change with exhortations to willpower. The gospel of Christ says, instead, that human responsibility legitimates presenting the kindness of Jesus to people and seeking the power of the Spirit to change.

But some of the misunderstanding is our fault. It highlights a problem, a crucial issue for contemporary biblical counseling. Our treatment of the victim side of the biblical portrayal of man has been anecdotal and occasional, not systematic. Under issue 2 we noted that rampant speculations about human motivation should not keep us from tackling the motivation questions biblically. Equally, rampant and systematized blameshifting should not deter us from developing the biblical view of how the things we suffer affect us.

Certainly in the biblical view sin is something we are "led into" by an enslaving master, Satan. We are blinded, powerless, led by the nose, tempted, attacked, deceived. In other words, we are victims of a slavemaster. Certainly in the biblical view sin is done to us as much as we do it to others. And sin is something we are "taught" by others, provoked to, encouraged in by the "world." In other words, we are victims of oppression. Certainly plain old

hardship provides many of the chief temptations to us all. It is no accident that "temptation" and "trial" are the same Greek word, *peirasmos*. In other words, we are victims needing deliverance from suffering. We are even victims (justly) of the curse of God and delivered from his wrath by the mercy of his Christ. All this said, certainly sin is the product of the flesh, with its lusts and desires. In other words, we are fully responsible! The Bible is not embarrassed to speak of world, flesh, and Devil as coconspirators, of man as jointly responsible and victim. The Bible is not embarrassed to speak of Jesus Christ as the Savior of people who are both guilty and oppressed.

The biblical notion of man as victim is, after all, the source of much of the compassion with which our Deliverer approaches his groaning people. Our God has compassion on sufferers, who are also sinners responsible for their responses to suffering, and who even may have brought suffering on themselves.

Are nouthetic counselors needlessly skittish about hearing and entering into the counselee's suffering for fear of encouraging blameshifting? I suspect so. Yet one central avenue of approach into the life of my counselee, my friend, my fellow, is through his suffering. His body is in pain. Satan is mounting assaults on his faith. He has had a lifetime of ungodly influences that persist into the present. He is experiencing situational uncertainties: his job future and his wife's health. Such a recognition and the patience to hear it, even to pursue it, will not sabotage recognition of his responsibility. It will rather set his responsibility firmly and realistically in context. His characteristic sins were and are often forged in reaction to suffering and being sinned against.

Unbiblical views construe man-as-victim to be a reason, an excuse, a cause for our faulty and negative actions. Biblically comprehending man-as-sufferer is never meant to answer "Why

do I sin?" It does answer "When? Where? With whom? Under whose influence?" It describes the situation in which one is tempted and tried. With new eyes, the situation of suffering becomes the "when, where, with whom, and against what" within which he will learn faith and obedience. We have said loudly, "responsible!" The biblical balance, "responsible amid hardship," has been more understated and assumed.

But what is understated and assumed easily becomes ineffectual. I suspect that at times we simply have been deficient in our counseling worldview; we have been subbiblical in the name of being biblical. Would anyone deny that "nouthetic" counseling practice often has been less than biblical in its sensitivity to suffering people? Biblical counselors often have worked for change in how people react to suffering without adequately attending (in word and deed) to how they experience and interpret suffering. One reason is because the biblical doctrine of "man as sufferer whom Christ delivers" has not been understood as clearly as the doctrine of "man as responsible whom Christ forgives." What we suffer powerfully influences us, even seems to rule us with an iron hand. What we suffer is then the context within which both human responsibility and Christ's power to set free operate.

We are sensitive to errors on one side of us, to the diminution of human responsibility by appeals to psychosocial trauma, situational stress, physiological causes, or demons. Are we as sensitive to the errors on the other side, to views of human responsibility that are essentially moralizing, evidencing a firm faith in willpower, self-discipline, and mind-control? There are unbiblical forms of responsibility just as destructive as unbiblical forms of victimization.

Do we subtly appeal to human willpower? Do we know how to put together the fact that counselees are often "very rebellious" and "very

hurt" at the same time, without washing over the latter just because our counselees and our culture make it primary? Do we labor hard and patiently to help counselees grasp the biblical view of suffering and temptation as the context within which to understand both their responsibility and God's grace? Do we discount Satan and his attacks on people? Do we brush over discussion of situational hardships as mere blameshifting? Do we move quickly past physical or emotional pain to immediately tackle the counselee's responsibility for his reaction? Are we patient? Do counselees know we understand how they experience life? Do we pray seriously because our biblical worldview teaches us that people cannot do it by willpower but need the direct grace and power of God?

Counselees typically want to change their circumstances. Nouthetic counselors typically want to change the counselee's behavior within those circumstances. The two can lock horns needlessly. Patient and sympathetic entry into the counselee's circumstances often can open the door for biblical categories to reinterpret those circumstances. As suffering is seen through God's eyes, biblical categories then expose the lusts of the heart which seek particular circumstantial blessings rather than the Giver of gifts and promises. On such a foundation particular steps of obedience can be mapped out. The behavioral changes proposed will not be selected arbitrarily off a generic list of good things to do. Instead, the behavior appropriate for that individual (those "good works prepared in advance by God") will flow specifically from three intertwined strands of biblical understanding: the counselee's behavior, motives (issue 2), and situation (issue 3). The second and third strands need to be brought up to the level of development that the first strand has enjoyed.

Our critics' perception that our practice is often defective has been accurate, even if their alternatives are grossly misguided. The biblical

alternative, another of the crucial issues in contemporary biblical counseling, is to articulate the full biblical view of both man and man's situation in all its power, realism, compassion, and subtlety. Then by the grace of God, we must mature in wisdom to practice counseling in the light of such truth.

4. We need to press much further in understanding the biblical data about the counselor-counselee relationship

Crucial issue 1 reaffirmed our epistemological and practical foundation. Issue 2 probed the nature of change. Issue 3 reexamined our understanding of the counselee and his situation. Issue 4 asks, "What is the nature of the relationship between the counselor and counselee?"

We all know that we are to "love" those we counsel. Biblical counseling is "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). What does this mean in practice? Nouthetic counseling has uniquely comprehended the authoritative, shepherdly, and truth-speaking elements in biblical love. We are known (perhaps notorious) for seeking to reflect the directive, confrontational, and authoritative style of counsel that the Bible repeatedly evidences.

The counseling world, Christian and non-Christian alike, abhors authority. It equates authority with authoritarianism. Instead, a therapist uses a relationship of acceptance to elicit healing forces from within the counselee. Biblical counseling has rightly stressed that the lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of his Word demand that counseling be authoritative if it is to be loving. We have avoided emphasizing the counseling relationship for fear that it smacks of transference, unconditional positive regard, and man-centeredness.

There is "danger to the left of us" in various secular constructions of the counselor-counselee relationship that zealously avoid any overt authority (covert authority is, of course, present in every

counseling system). But there is also danger to the other side. The biblical view of the counseling relationship has nonauthoritative elements, in which the counselee sets the agenda, in which "the relationship" is central to constructive counseling taking place! The Scripture demands that we probe the interplay between authority and mutuality characteristic of healthy biblical relationships. We must mirror the variety of counselor-counselee configurations that the Bible portrays as vehicles for the Lord's authority.

Given the ways we historically have fought against unbiblical notions, it is perhaps no wonder that nouthetic counselors have tended even to be a bit suspicious of the counselee, have insisted on maintaining control of the agenda, have aimed for quick and obvious changes, have hesitated to appear too caring, have been leery of long-term counseling relationships. We need to rethink this. In fact, the authoritative shepherd who decisively intervenes is only one of the modes of biblical counseling. It is not even the primary mode. It is the backup mode for when the primary mode fails. The most characteristic biblical counseling relationship is a long-term friendship, consisting of mutually invited counsel, generating dependency on God and a constructive interdependency on one another. The authoritative, short-term intervention is the emergency, lifesaving measure. Is this a new message within nouthetic counseling? Far from it. There always has been a peculiar (and biblical!) tension within nouthetic counseling between short-term "restorative" counseling and ongoing "preventive" counseling.

On the one hand, nouthetic counseling has stressed the authoritative ministry of the Word. Adams has written at length about the counseling role of the pastor as "God's professional" and about the connections between remedial counseling and church discipline. His books on counseling method, in particular *The Christian Counselor's*

Manual and Ready to Restore, set forth a model of counseling that is relatively formal, with well-defined roles. The counselor leads, sits behind the desk, sets the agenda, interprets authoritatively from the Bible, confronts, encourages, and guides. The counselee provides honest data, commits himself to counseling, and follows the remedial steps outlined.

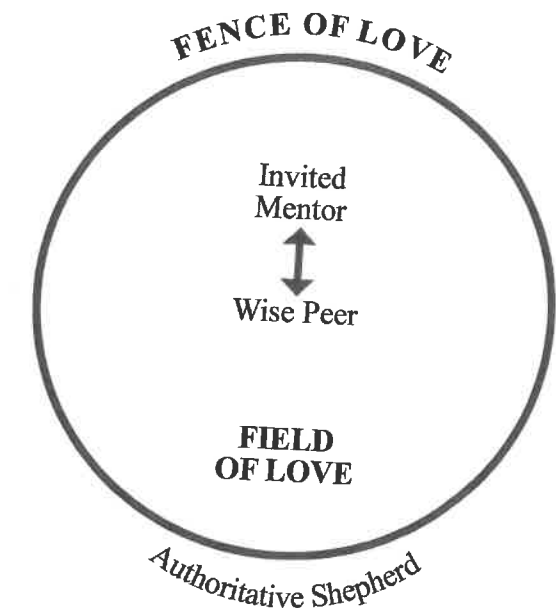
On the other hand, from the beginning nouthetic counseling has had a peer counseling thrust which deprofessionalizes counseling. It says all wise Christians are competent to counsel one another. The laycounseling emphasis of *Competent to Counsel* implicitly and explicitly downplayed the formalized notion that counseling means a competent expert serves a needy client in a formal relationship. In fact, the daily-life normality of mutual counsel that the Bible presupposes has often become an invigorating reality in churches influenced by nouthetic counseling.² In this peer counseling mode, counseling moves out of the office and into all of life. Counseling verges into honest friendships, child-rearing, marriage, discipleship, small groups, and all the one-anothering that Christians do with each other.

Biblical counseling, then, has not only implied six to twelve weeks of strongly interventionist and directive counseling. It has also implied how my best friends and I ought to relate to each other over the next thirty years: as equals, honestly and mutually encouraging one another in a long-term (even lifelong!) "counseling" relationship. Such counseling occasionally requires one to confront the other. But the basis is trust, honesty about struggles, self-confrontation, mutual care, affirmation, and so forth. The "agenda" emerges only in the give and take of seeking to know and encourage one another. Adams set forth a vision in which self-counseling and informal mutual counseling create the context for formal, remedial counseling and discipline.³

One of the crucial issues in contemporary biblical counseling is the further articulation of the relationship between the more authoritative, frankly remedial elements of counseling and the more mutual, ongoing encouragement elements. Adams's emphasis has been on the former. This is evidenced most clearly by the relatively formal counseling model that his laycounseling book, *Ready to Restore*, presents. Adams comments, "Lay counseling must be both preventive and remedial. But in this book we shall be concerned almost exclusively with nouthetic, or remedial, counseling" (p. 10). Our goal is systematically biblical counseling, the ministry of God's truth in love. The "nouthetic" part of biblical counseling is the "fence." It is the backup mode of biblical counseling. It is for when the sheep leave the green pastures to wander out into the desert. The "paracletic" part of biblical counseling is the "field." It is the primary mode of biblical counseling, containing all the mutually edifying, encouraging, one-anothering, nourishing, praying, and loving that is the normal Christian life. It is as much a two-way street as possible. It is as egalitarian as possible. It is as *biblically* "nondirective and client-centered" as possible. The truth content and goals of counseling are invariable, fixed by Scripture. This same Scripture tells us God uses many different forms of relationships to write his Word on our hearts.

Figure 2 portrays the relationship between the authoritative fence and the mutual field in which counseling takes place. We are well known for having the fence. We are probably the only formal counseling system around that even realizes that love has a fence. There is a time to confront a counselee frankly, and biblical counseling is bounded by church discipline. But I submit that it is very important that we become equally well known for the field. Here, after all, is the place where most of the joys, changes, and constructive

FIGURE 2



counseling take place. "Preventive" is too bland to describe the field of love. Perhaps we should call the center of the circle "invited" or "wise peer" counseling.

Within the field of love there is a spectrum between invited counsel from a respected person and a more fully peer relationship. Parents, disciplers, pastors, elders, and other wise people often function in the mentor role. People seek out someone whom they respect and trust, whom they know cares for them and is wise. But full mutuality under the Lord's authority is always the desirable goal. It is, of course, unattainable in a world with children, with new converts, with great sanctification needs in old converts, with warfare and hardships. But when we are all "fully taught," this is what we shall all be like. The peer reality can be realized in part, and it ought to be fully integrated into our vision of biblical counseling's central intent. The fence is the boundary of life; the field is the life.

I see a series of benefits coming out of developing neglected elements in the counselor-counselee relationship. I will briefly sketch four benefits. First, we will gain greatly in flexibility to relate

differently to different counselees. There are various ways for structuring the counseling relationship. A brief, highly structured intervention (say over six to twelve weeks) may be the appropriate strategy for helping person A at a certain stage of his life. It may be wholly inappropriate for person B, who would benefit more from ongoing accountability, friendship, and greater mutuality with a wise friend—equally biblical counseling, equally submitted to the authority of the Word.

Second, by articulating a dominant peer mode whose boundaries are the authoritative mode, we open the door wide for all Christians to counsel. Many counseling gifts are given by God to people who will rarely be called to take an authoritative position toward another. Articulating the way in which biblical counseling is a “fenced field of love” will free people to see that the very heart of biblical counseling is open to all with wisdom.

Third, biblical counseling has barely touched on many potential strengths that flow from the counseling relationship. “The relationship” is a powerful aspect of counseling. We must not let the secular emphases on transference and unconditional positive regard make us shy away from exploring a rich biblical vein. Paul continually counsels and teaches biblical truth in the context of his personal relationship with his hearers. His joys, prayers, anguish, fears, trials, needs for prayer, wonderments about his hearers, tears, memories, attitudes, plans, hopes—these and more are continually on the table. Is our relatively impersonal and objective pastoral counseling biblical here? Are we simply mirroring the professional detachment of our culture’s forms of psychotherapy?

One consequence of enhanced appreciation of the relationship between the counselor and counselee is that more attention will be paid to events within the counseling process itself. Immediate

data, features of the relationships between counselor, counselee, and God played out right in the room, can be particularly useful grist for the mill of biblical counseling. The counselee will not only bring outside life in, to be worked on in counseling; counselors will be attentive to the continuity between outside life and counseling. How are we treating one another? Biblical changes in attitude and actions that happen right within the friendship of counseling (from both parties!) can then ripple out into the rest of life.

Fourth, as we enrich our perspective on the biblical counseling relationship, we will change the “flavor” of much of the counseling we do. The vast bulk of biblical counseling will not look authoritative. In fact, it is desirable that a pastor aim to deemphasize the authoritative, formal, confrontive, and unilateral elements in his counseling as much as is appropriate to the case at hand. We should save the fence for when it is really needed. How many counselees have been needlessly confronted—perhaps even put on the defensive—when they would have confronted themselves if a probing and inviting question had been asked? Biblical counseling, like healthy family life, has a minimal number of confrontational and disciplinary events. Confrontation usually cuts deepest when the other forms of constructive relating create the dominant tone.

In summary, biblical counseling has always contained the seeds of two complementary visions of counseling: one relatively more authoritative and the other relatively more mutual. The former has been articulated in detail. The latter has always been more implicit, more the logical implication of the competency of wise people to help one another. These other dimensions in the counselor-counselee relationship must be articulated explicitly.

5. Biblical counseling must be contextualized to new audiences

The crucial issues of motivation, suffering, and the counseling relationship each concern our conceptual balance and the way we go about our counseling. Crucial issue 5 is a different sort of issue. It has to do with who we speak with about what we believe. Biblical counseling needs to interact with a wider audience. We have generally spoken to the conservative pastor in the trenches and to the counseling-minded layperson. We have given them tools to counsel more confidently and effectively. Our target audience has been the local church.

Biblical counseling must cultivate other audiences. We need to do so for our own edification as a truly biblical movement. We need to do so in order to edify others with what God has given us. I would like to propose one particular audience into which biblical counseling must be contextualized. We need to speak with Christian academics. We have barely begun to generate meaningful dialogue with the faculty and students in Christian colleges and seminaries.

Biblical counseling has been a grassroots movement, finding its home in healthy local church life. This is a great strength. Biblical counseling gets established in local churches because it works to transform lives. It works to transform lives because it is God’s pattern for ministry: love woven through with truth. But, unfortunately, we generally have been shut out from intellectual and educational centers. We have shut ourselves out because we have not addressed that audience. Biblical counseling *does* have intellectual integrity and power, yet is not speaking to the more intellectual segments of Christian culture. Indeed, it is often dismissed as anti-intellectual and simple-minded.

How do we explain this and answer the charge? I believe the answer essentially boils down to a

matter of audience analysis. Jay Adams wrote of the local church. He consciously selected his audience. He spoke the language of persuasion to the audience. Like any good preacher of the Word of God, he concealed his intellectual “bones” within vivid illustrational and practical teaching. He gave people something to respond to, believe in, and act upon. He did not dwell on qualifications, counterinstances, and nuances. He simply sought to speak clearly, simply, and persuasively. Of course he overgeneralized and oversimplified. This was not because Adams does not believe in complexities and vexed questions. It was because he does believe in the primary importance of certain central, life-changing, and essentially simple truths.

Critics have misread simple for simplistic. Biblical counseling is informed by a highly developed theological tradition. Its roots are as intellectual as they are practical. Biblical counseling is, however, like the Bible, anti-intellectualistic. This has generated a certain basic criticism of academia and the secular professions. The counseling world, Christian and non-Christian alike, guards its turf by creating technical vocabularies and professional structures into which would-be counselors must be initiated. Biblical counseling has rightly stressed that wisdom, lying open on the pages of Scripture, is the sole criterion for counseling. We have opposed their pretension to proprietary rights over knowledge and efficacy in the arena of counseling. We have opposed the professional elitism inherent in secular psychology, an elitism mirrored in most Christian counseling. We have opposed the notion that nonbiblical experts possess the turf of “psychological, emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal problems.” We have opposed the obscurantism that substitutes technical jargon for plain talk, which confuses a label or diagnosis for true knowledge. We even have thought that academia was not the primary arena in which to discuss counseling. It is a secondary arena with well-institutionalized

pretensions to primacy. So we have addressed the church because *biblical* counseling is meant for the daily lives of God's people.

The grass roots always will be and always should be the primary constituency for biblical counseling. First things first. Among counseling systems, nouthetic counseling has uniquely seen the centrality of Scripture, obedience to the Lord, human responsibility, the fence of love, and the local church ministry. But, as in the other crucial issues, we must redress imbalances. We need to reach out to the educational wing of the church of Christ. If we neglect Christian academia, the development and spread of biblical counseling will be seriously hindered.

Much of the rejection of biblical counseling in Christian academia is because of the offense of the message. We have challenged the intellectual and practical habits of secular professionalism, habits that are rampant in the educational institutions and professional organizations of Christian counseling. But I am persuaded that much of the rejection is also because we have not yet spoken their language. The offense is not the message but the medium and style. Within a context of genuine dialogue, we need to articulate the same truths in a form that is culturally hear-able.

At minimum, we want people to disagree with us intelligently, not on the basis of a caricature. Repeatedly, I have encountered gross misunderstandings of what biblical counseling was all about in people who are not as far from our basic commitments as we may think. I cannot count the number of folks from the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS), our "arch foes" when it comes to counseling, who have thought of us as crudely behavioristic, lacking even the rudiments of a view of inner life and motivation. They think Adams's comments about the sin of being "feeling oriented" meant biblical counseling discounted emotions as bad or irrelevant, just

as it discounted everything about motivation and thinking.

But feeling orientation is actually a profound motivational concept stated in street talk. It has nothing to do with whether emotions are good or bad, important or trivial. Feeling orientation is meant to communicate vividly to counselees: children or adults, illiterate or educated. Our lives get in trouble because we interpret life via unexamined subjective experience ("I feel that . . .") and because we live for what we want ("I feel like . . ."). The most profound issue in every person's life is whether he is feeling oriented or Christ oriented. Are we ruled in detail by world, flesh, devil, desires, and idols? Or are we liberated into the rule of the Lord whose truth, love, and grace we trust and delight in?

Feeling orientation often communicates well to the man in the pew or counseling office. But it bewilders scholars who wrestle to make more precise sense of human motivation and emotions. The term confuses them rather than edifies. Is that their fault? It is no more their fault than if I tried to counsel a troubled teenager by alluding to the *epithumiai tes sarkes* ("lusts of the flesh") without providing extensive translation and illustration! The solution? Analyze our audience. Contextualize our insights to the questions they are asking and the language they speak. Biblical categories have a powerful and subtle explanatory power.⁴ We are not being heard through the misunderstandings of what we are saying. The responsibility to create understanding is first of all ours.

Many are alienated from our message for bad reasons, not good reasons. I have found many CAPS people who respected what we were saying once they understood it. A few loved it and have come over to become frankly committed biblical counselors. It was something they had been looking for and did not know where to find. We need to build relationships. Some people have

experienced us—or imagined us—to be prickly, impolite, and unfriendly. It is our fault if we allow such an image to be perpetuated.

We need to speak a different language to target a different people group. At the simplest strategic level, we must employ the article and book that deals with theoretical questions, ambiguities, and complexities. We must have at least some non-popular writing. Our immediate goal must be to generate an extended dialogue, to listen as well as to hear. This strategy differs from the sermon, which consciously simplifies in order to immediately edify. Of course I believe that those who oppose us need the insights about psychology and biblical counseling that we have. But I also believe that we need the—many?!—potential allies and constructive critics we will find amid the current opposition.

To date we have reached thousands of Christian people with the message of biblical counseling. We need to continue to reach these same people as our primary focus. The local church people are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. But we also need to analyze a different audience and expend some legitimate effort in reaching the educational wing of Christendom. Is addressing academia simply a nice idea, to be attended to someday? I think it is a crucial issue now. The future of the *local church* is involved! Where are the church leaders and counselors of tomorrow being trained today? They are being trained in institutions where biblical counseling is dismissed with a wave of the hand.

We are on a narrow base at the moment. I am convinced with my whole heart that God has given us biblical-nouthetic counselors some outstanding and needed insights. Richard Lovelace, in summarizing the counseling needs of the church of Christ, commented, "The counseling approach which is most likely to help in congregational renewal is a tuned and adapted form of nouthetic counseling."⁵ This article is in part a call for such tuning

and adapting to occur in some critical intellectual areas. But the crucial issues facing us are social as well as intellectual. I am convinced that we are shut up in a fairly narrow sector of believing Christendom, and that to spread the word more widely will bless, stimulate, and change us as much as it edifies others.

6. The relationship of biblical counseling to secular psychology needs to be publicly clarified

We need to clarify the nuances in our view of secular psychology. Our rejection of secularism has been in the headlines. The subtleties of the biblical response to secular knowledge have been in the fine print. Both halves of our view need to be developed if we are not only going to squeeze error out of the church but also going to speak cogently and persuasively to a psychologized culture.

Wait a minute, you might be thinking, *I thought you dealt with psychology when you discussed the abiding relevance of the "same old issues" that nouthetic counseling has always stressed!* Perhaps it seems a paradox, but the final crucial issue for contemporary biblical counseling is the need to define more clearly the nuances in our relationship to secular thinking. The relationship of presuppositionally consistent Christianity to secular culture is not simply one of rejection. Half of what biblical presuppositions give us is a way to discern the lie that tries to make people think about themselves as autonomous from God.

But the other half of what biblical categories do is give us a way of appreciating, redeeming, and reframing the culture of even the most godless men and women. We are, after all, even able to use the data gathered from godless counselees, reinterpreting their own perceptions back to them in biblical categories that turn their world inside out and upside down!

The critics of nouthetic counseling forget—and perhaps even those who like our opposition to secularist thought forget—that Jay Adams spoke from the beginning of a legitimate role for psychology. Right from the first chapter of *Competent to Counsel* the door was open for a properly constructed relationship between secular psychology and biblical counseling. “First, I am aware that my interpretations and applications of Scripture are not infallible. Secondly, I do not wish to disregard science, but rather I welcome it as a useful adjunct for the purposes of illustrating, filling in generalizations with specifics, and challenging wrong human interpretations of Scripture, thereby forcing the student to restudy the Scriptures.”⁶ Biblical counseling has never developed in any detail what that properly constructed relationship would look like or do. We have been busy establishing and defending where we stand.

I have previously spoken of secularized psychology as an enemy of biblical faith and biblical counseling practice. That stated, it is important to remember that historically Christians have done a number of different things with their enemies. There is error “to the left of us”: capitulation and compromise with the world. We live in a Christian counseling world captivated by psychology. There is also error “to the right of us”: running from our enemies, flatly rejecting them, perhaps fearing them, and separating ourselves. This latter temptation is the one nouthetic counseling faces. As in the previous crucial issues, there is an imbalance that needs to be corrected if we are to be more fully biblical.

Christians have not only capitulated or isolated themselves. Sometimes Christians fight with the weapons of truth and love. We are not only called to be stimulated by detailed error and to reject that error. We are also called to redeem error by placing distorted bits back within their proper biblical framework. The evangelistic and apologetic strength of biblical counseling hangs in large

degree on such an endeavor. Clear presuppositional thinking creates three strategies.

First, Christians should be stimulated by their enemies. We are forced to sort out what the Bible does say positively. Enemies are incredibly useful. In the sovereignty of God enemies act as catalysts. Unbelievers have often thought long and studied hard in areas that Christians have neglected. The close study of human beings for the purpose of changing them was one of these areas. Biblical counseling was a product of such negative prodding. Biblical presuppositions undergird a strategy of exposition provoked by questions that secular thought and practice raise for the church.

Second, Christians should oppose their enemies frankly. Knowing what we believe gives us a basis to reject what is wrong. Unbiblical concepts and practices have been understood, analyzed, and rejected as false teaching. Biblical counseling is well known for rejecting secular psychology. Secular theorists are false prophets. Those who import their ideas into the church are deceived, at best, and wolves in sheep’s clothing, at worst. Biblical presuppositions undergird a strategy of negation.

Third, Christians should love and seek to convert their enemies. We have answers that are richer, truer, fuller. Our answers incorporate the very insights that non-Christians distort. We make these shine in their proper framework, proportion, and balance within the categories of biblical truth. I am proposing that we think hard about this third strategy toward our enemies. Paul used this strategy in Acts 17:22–31. His evangelistic and apologetic strategy in Athens was based on capturing three particular unbiblical thoughts (vv. 23, 28a, and 28b). He reframed them, making them function in a biblical worldview. Did he “integrate” paganism and the Word of God? No, Paul meant wholly different things from the original authors’ intent. Consistent presuppositional thinking comes to fruition not only in strategies of exposition and

negation. Biblical presuppositions also undergird a strategy of capture.

Presuppositional thinking has these three beauties. We have revelled in the first two but feared to look into the third. It smells dangerously of “integration.” But it is not integration as that has been practiced. It is wholly different. It is a systematic reframing and reinterpreting of what secularized people see most clearly, care about most deeply, and do most skillfully. Grasping this difference is a crucial issue for contemporary biblical counseling. Beauty 1: We learn biblical categories, often through the catalyst of our enemies. Beauty 2: We attack every shred of secular thinking which would wrench human life out of context and deny God. Beauty 3: We have categories to reframe every tiny bit of secular thinking so it functions as a comprehensible part of the God-centered world. We know what they are *really* looking at.

Beauty 3 is central to the evangelistic strategy of biblical counseling. By it we redeem what was lost. We take “insights” stolen from God and distorted to work within an alien system. We presuppositional Christians need to ponder beauty 3. We have received the benefit of 1 in order to appreciate biblical truth. We have shouted out 2 in order to hold the fort against alien ideas. But beauty 3 is what a large group of Christians need to hear from us. It is what will also speak to the secular psychological world. Psychologists—Christian and non-Christian alike—are right that “biblical truth” and the rejection of error have often coexisted with massive ignorance about how in-the-flesh people really worked. They have sought to look closely . . . but they have misinterpreted what they see. Let us provide the eyeglasses that bring even error into submission to God. Beauty 3 provides the paradigm shift, the conversion experience, that changes the way familiar data looks. Beauty 3 will draw many who are currently both intellectual and psychological—Christians and non-Christians—

into useful partnership within the biblical counseling movement.

One of the ironies—whether it is bitter, humorous, or sublime I am unsure!—attending the contemporary Christian counseling world is that we, of all people, are the ones who will successfully “integrate” secular psychology. Integrationists are too impressed with psychology’s insights to be able to win them to Christ or to systematically reinterpret their insights and skills. Integrationists have missed the point that the *big* question between Christians and secular psychologists is not, “What can we learn from them?” The big question is, “How can we speak into their world to turn their world upside down?” But it is also fair to say that presuppositionalists have missed that the *big* question between biblical counseling and Christian integrationists is not, “Having rejected their syncretism, how can we reject and avoid them?” The big question is, “How can we speak constructively into their world?” The key to both big questions is an ability to reframe everything that psychologists see and hold dear, and to reinterpret it into the categories of biblical truth. If we do our homework, then biblical counseling not only will be a message for the psychologized church. It will be a message for the psychologized world.

Think about this: *If* biblical counseling is true, if it is indeed biblical, then it *will* have a wide evangelistic and apologetic thrust. Is it premature to envision the conquest of the world when we are, like the French Resistance in World War II, still fighting an underground battle for our lives within our own homeland? Perhaps. But let us open our eyes to the fact that this is what we will be called to someday. And just perhaps, we are called to start now.

Is it premature? No. At minimum, there are thousands of Christians—psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, college psychology majors,

counselees drinking from a different well—who can be won by an approach that interacts with and radically reframes what enamors them about psychology. Usually what makes error enamoring is a perceived lack in their church and Bible experience. The real Bible and biblical counseling make up these lacks in ways people never have dreamed. I am not minimizing the opposition we will continue to face. Biblical counseling, by definition, treads on the toes of those whose intellectual, professional, and educational lives have been staked on the validity of secular psychology. But there are lots of Christians out there looking for a paradigm shift in which they can believe. More than we realize. Maybe there are non-Christians as well.

We must do our homework in beauty 3. We must state—and concretely illustrate—the riches of our position toward secular psychology.⁷ This is one of the crucial questions facing us. Presuppositional thinking gives powerful tools we have as yet barely begun to use. We need these tools if we are to raise our sights to the possibility of doing evangelistic work at a high intellectual level with the secular psychological and psychiatric communities. If we are faithful and prayerful, the hour will come.

Conclusions

Each of the crucial issues facing contemporary biblical counseling is a test, illuminating where we are. Each delivers a challenge, calling us to where we must go. Each holds a promise, inviting us to the fresh wisdom that will come as we explore the riches of Scripture and life, and as we pursue new friendships within the body of Christ. Biblical truth is balanced, elegant, and potent to transform lives. Our exploration of neglected riches will bring biblical counseling practice into greater conformity with such truth. The way we as a movement face

these six crucial issues will determine the scope, depth, and future of our usefulness to the Lord.

In a thoughtful and thought-provoking personal letter, John Carter of Rosemead Graduate School, one of the leading critics of nouthetic counseling, commented that nouthetic counseling could only speak to audiences “who already shared Jay Adams’s perspective.” There was little that could be done creatively within the “radically biblical perspective” because everything such a limited perspective could say had been said already either explicitly or implicitly. As a movement we were likely to stagnate into rehashing among ourselves the thoughts of one man.⁸

Carter’s words are sobering and challenging. If he is right, we are less than biblical. For the Bible portrays itself as a fountain of life, granting fresh wisdom to all who ask and dig, producing ministry that changes lives significantly. If he is right, then this article has been wrong, and it is a pathetic dream for me to lift up my eyes and see the whole world waiting. But I think Carter is wrong. Our vision has always far outstripped our attainment because it is a biblical vision. If we are indeed *biblical*, then the foundational presupposition—radically biblical counseling—will generate a dynamic of life, growth, and expansion, not stagnation. It will liberate, not limit.

Jay Adams is the only author I have ever read who has publicly and repeatedly invited collaborators to work and write in areas he barely has touched. The unexplored and undeveloped regions are more numerous than the explored. Biblical counseling’s main treasure is a few big and provocative ideas. Biblical ideas. God’s ideas. Seminal ideas that have implications beyond what we can even imagine:

*The Scriptures are authoritative
and sufficient for counseling;
Counseling is ministry—a function of the church
accomplishing sanctification.*

Many individual treasures have been already mined and refined, both exegetical riches and counseling methods. But there is much more to learn and then to say. I can do no better than to close by saying, “The subject of this paper—indeed, the subject of every section of this paper—demands at the very least a definitive book or two.”

Appendix 2 Notes

1. See Proverbs 3:5–7 and Jeremiah 17:5–8 for two examples (among many) of the from-to structure of the Bible’s view of motivation.

2. The vision set forth in Jay E. Adams, “Your Place in the Counseling Revolution,” in *Lectures on Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 46f.

3. Jay E. Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 21–44.

4. See David Powlison, “What Do You Feel?,” *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 10, no. 4 (1992): 50–61 for a discussion of the nuances in the language of “feelings.”

5. Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1979), 218.

6. Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976), xxi.

7. See David Powlison, “Human Defensiveness: The Third Way,” *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 8, no. 1 (1985): 40–55 for one attempt to do this at a high level of generality.

8. Personal correspondence with John Carter, November 1980.