

**THE AUTHORITY AND SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE
AND THE ROLE OF EXTRA-BIBLICAL RESOURCES
IN TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

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ABSTRACT

Paul affirmed to Timothy the authority, capacity, and sufficiency of the Scriptures for the adequacy of the believer.¹ In similar fashion Jesus applied the sufficiency of Scripture in responding to His testing by Satan. Yet in close proximity to both instances we observe the employment of extra-Biblical resources in complementing the situation. In Paul's case, even as he exhorts Timothy to faithfulness in the word, he acknowledges value in Timothy's attentiveness to not only what Paul taught and wrote, but to his experiences as well.² In Jesus' case, He acknowledges there is a place for bread, though it ought not be viewed as the sole source of life.³ Likewise, after His testing He was the beneficiary of angelic ministry.⁴

In both instances, the word of God is affirmed as authoritative and sufficient, and in both situations, other resources help to set or complete the context. Considering these and other Biblical scenarios, this paper evaluates the nature of Biblical authority and sufficiency and the role of extra-Biblical resources in transformative teaching and learning. To underscore the practical value of the authority and sufficiency issues, this study also compares principles observed in the Biblical narratives with principles employed in psychology and counseling, providing a case study for the application of extra-Biblical resources in transformative teaching and learning contexts.

THREE VIEWS OF AUTHORITY AND TRADITION

Within Christianity there are three primary perspectives on the relationship of Biblical authority and Biblical tradition. The first (B+T) views the Bible as authoritative, but also views Tradition (with a capital T) as provided by God and as equally authoritative. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC), for example, embraces this approach. The second (B+t) views the Bible as authoritative, but views tradition (little t) as a necessary hermeneutic lens through which to view the Bible. Reformed and Covenant theology take this view. The third (B+Ø) holds to the idea that the Bible is exclusively authoritative, and that while tradition is important for understanding

¹ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

² 2 Timothy 3:10-11.

³ Matthew 4:4, from Deuteronomy 8:3.

⁴ Matthew 4:11.

contexts and interacting with people, it is neither a source of doctrinal authority nor a hermeneutic aid. This third approach is distinctive in its a commitment to applying *sola scriptura* in every area of faith and practice.

Bible Plus Capital-T Tradition (B+T)⁵

While both Catholic and Protestant teachings affirm the authority of the Bible, there are two significant distinctions between the Catholic and Protestant understandings of how exclusive the Bible's authority actually is. First is found in the extent to which the analogy of faith applies. In Protestant methodology, the analogy of faith is understood as Scripture interpreting Scripture, whereas in Catholic methodology, there is a higher opinion of extra-biblical material – the explanations and declarations of the teaching authority of the church. On this, the Catechism explains that, "The whole body of the faithful...cannot err in matters of belief,⁶ and because the Church is our mother, she is also our teacher in the faith."⁷ "The Church...does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."⁸

The second major difference is in the related ideas of *ex cathedra* and apostolic succession. In Catholic understanding, the Church is built on Peter, the unshakeable rock of the church.⁹ Thus from Peter the church gains her authority, and the Popes derive their *ex cathedra* authority. In Protestant understanding, Jesus is the rock upon which the church is built, being the rock of offense, and a fulfillment of Isaiah 8:14, as acknowledged by Peter in 1 Peter 2:8. This variance in interpretation sets distinct trajectories for both groups – Catholics finding revelation to extend beyond the biblical text, and Protestants, asserting that revelation goes no further than the completed texts that Jesus affirmed and commissioned. Consequently, the divergent epistemological moorings contribute to the disparate (and at times violently so) theological conclusions.

Catholic exegetes defined both the direction and the method to be followed in the task of understanding the Scriptures,¹⁰ which entailed investigation and explanation through the study of original languages and reliance on original texts.¹¹ However Pius XII acknowledged that especially during the middle ages, theologians lacked the requisite knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, and found themselves reliant on the Latin Vulgate.¹² Instead of availing themselves of "the aids which all branches of philology supply,"¹³ scholars during that time had limited resources

⁵ Portions of this section adapted from Christopher Cone, "Authority of Scripture and Hermeneutic Method as Historical and Continual Bases for Christian Unity and the Collaborative Avenues They Imply," a paper presented to the Florovsky Week Symposium, Newman University, Wichita, Kansas, July 11, 2018.

⁶ Catechism, 92.

⁷ Ibid., 169.

⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁹ Ibid., 552.

¹⁰ Pope Pius XII, "Divino Afflante Spirito," Paragraph 9.

¹¹ Ibid., 14.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 16.

and limited knowledge. But, asserts Pius XII, like Jerome, we ought to “explain the original text which, having been written by the inspired author himself, has more authority and greater weight than any even the very best translation, whether ancient or modern; this can be done all the more easily and fruitfully, if to the knowledge of languages be joined a real skill in literary criticism of the same text.”¹⁴ Thus attention to the biblical languages and to textual criticism become central to understanding Scripture. Pius XII was emphatic regarding the necessity of and demand for such scientific study of the text:

this prolonged labor is not only necessary for the right understanding of the divinely-given writings, but also is urgently demanded by that piety by which it behooves us to be grateful to the God of all providence, Who from the throne of His majesty has sent these books as so many paternal letters to His own children.¹⁵

Pius XII is careful to mention that the Vulgate still has great value (as emphasized in the Council of Trent),¹⁶ and was perhaps even preferable in some sense, since it had been “approved by its long continued use for so many centuries in the Church.”¹⁷ Because the Vulgate was “free from any error whatsoever in matters of faith and morals...it may be quoted safely and without fear of error...so its authenticity is not specified primarily as critical, but rather as juridical.”¹⁸ Still, for the making clear of doctrine, the authority of the Vulgate “almost demands either the corroboration and confirmation of this same doctrine by the original texts or the having recourse on any and every occasion to the aid of these same texts.”¹⁹

Because Jerome included apocryphal books in his Vulgate translation, (possibly based on their inclusion in the Greek Codex Sinaiticus) those books remain an esteemed component of the Catholic Bible. These texts are typically rejected by Protestants on grounds that they are historically separated from the Hebrew OT, and based on some of the doctrinal conclusions the apocryphal books derive.²⁰ These disputed texts represent a point of division between Catholic and Protestant, as the Council of Trent in 1546 codified the Apocrypha to be inspired, cementing that aspect of disagreement.

While English translations of the OT contain around 600,000 words, and the NT contains around 175,000 words, the Apocrypha includes about 160,000. Because the Apocrypha is nearly the size of the NT, the textual basis for Catholic and Protestant disagreement is not insignificant, nor are the doctrinal distinctions unimportant. The most severe of these differences is evident in the context of how a person is justified before God.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶ Ibid, 20.

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 22.

²⁰ E.g., 2 Maccabees considers prayer and sacrificial offerings for the dead, the merits of the martyrs, and intercession of saints; Tobit 12:9 and 14:11 seems to suggest that almsgiving purges sin; 1 Maccabees 2:52 suggests that Abraham’s passing the test was reckoned to him as righteousness, not his believe in the Lord (as in Gen 15:6); 2 Maccabees 12:41-45 presents the doctrine of purgatory; and 2 Maccabees also considers sacrificial offerings for the dead, the merits of the martyrs, and intercession of saints, etc.

Virtually every single one of Luther's *95 Theses* pertain to issues relating to how one is justified, and the implications for remission of sins, purgatory, papal authority, the use of indulgences, etc. Luther was largely protesting what he perceived to be a taught doctrine of salvation by works, and added to his translation of Romans 3:28 the word "alone," in order to ensure the understanding that justification comes by faith alone. On the other hand, Catholic soteriology agrees that "Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation,"²¹ and "without faith no one has ever attained justification."²² Still, that "We can lose this priceless gift"²³ illustrates that justification, in the Catholic soteriological system, is not by faith alone.

The Catholic hermeneutic also has at its core a commitment to the literal meaning of Scripture. Pius XII's exhortation to that end provides no lack of clarity:

Being thoroughly prepared by the knowledge of the ancient languages and by the aids afforded by the art of criticism, let the Catholic exegete undertake the task, of all those imposed on him the greatest, that namely of discovering and expounding the genuine meaning of the Sacred Books. In the performance of this task let the interpreters bear in mind that *their foremost and greatest endeavor should be to discern and define clearly that sense of the biblical words which is called literal*. Aided by the context and by comparison with similar passages, let them therefore by means of their knowledge of languages search out with all diligence the literal meaning of the words; all these helps indeed are wont to be pressed into service in the explanation also of profane writers, so that the mind of the author may be made abundantly clear [emphasis mine].²⁴

Still, just as there is attention given to the literal aspect of the text, there are other hermeneutic commitments that distinguish the Catholic hermeneutic. The Second Vatican Council prescribes three criteria for interpreting Scripture: "1. Be especially attentive to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture...2. Read the Scripture within the living Tradition of the whole Church...3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith."²⁵ In these three criteria is evident the value attributed to tradition as a vital lens through which to view Scripture. Further, the Protestant hermeneutic is well represented by Luther's assertion, quoted by Farrar, that "The literal sense of Scripture alone is the whole essence of faith and of Christian theology,"²⁶ whereas the Catholic methodology upholds a plurality of senses in Scriptural meaning: "According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of the Scripture in the church."²⁷

²¹ Catechism, 161.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 162.

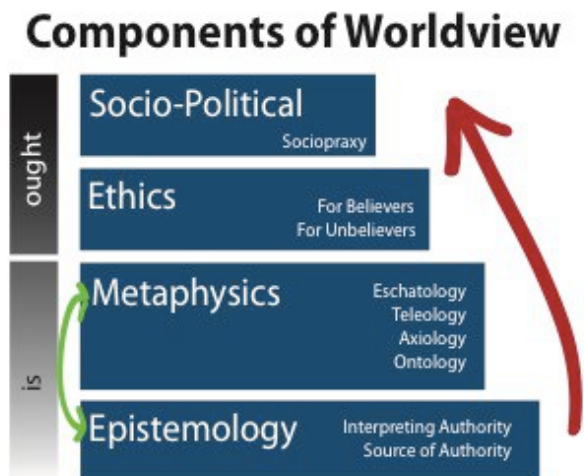
²⁴ Pope Pius XII, "Divino Afflante Spirito," 23.

²⁵ Catechism, 112-114.

²⁶ Frederic Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (London: McMillan and Co., 1886), 327.

²⁷ Catechism, 115-117.

In these contexts – understandings of what constitutes Scripture, the exclusivity of biblical authority, and hermeneutic methodology, the essential source of authority is ultimately not the same for Protestantism and Catholicism. If in a biblical worldview the source of authority is God as revealed in the Bible, then the Bible is the final and unaugmented record of God’s outline for



worldview, including descriptive aspects of epistemological and metaphysical concepts, and prescriptive aspects of the ethics and socio political thought.

In a Catholic worldview, the source of authority is still recognized as the biblical God, but He reveals Himself in more diverse ways than simply the pages of the Bible. Consequently, there are differences between Catholicism and Protestantism in both the

descriptive elements of worldview (epistemology and metaphysics) and the prescriptive elements (ethics and socio-political).

Bible Plus Little-t Tradition (B+t)

Cornelius Van Til is astute on three significant pillars of Biblical epistemology: (1), the Biblical God exists, (2) He has revealed himself authoritatively, and (3) Natural man's incapacity to receive, but his epistemology falls short in that he does not account for hermeneutics (Pillar 4) *within* his epistemology. In fact, in his Th.M thesis, "Reformed Epistemology," Van Til does not discuss Biblical interpretation. Much of his critique of other thinkers, like Kant, includes considerable discussion of their deficiencies in the interpretation of experience, but not a word about method in interpreting Scripture. It is surprising to this writer that Van Til would build such an outstanding foundational framework on special revelation and then totally ignore the centrality of hermeneutic method for understanding that revelation, because Biblical hermeneutics as an absolutely necessary component of epistemology. In his *The New Hermeneutic*, Van Til concludes, with these words, "...we would appeal to the Cahier's men, to Wiersinga and to others, to build their hermeneutical procedures on the theology of Calvin, Kuyper, Bavinck, etc., (emphasis mine) and then in terms of it to challenge all men to repentance and faith in the self-identifying Christ of Scripture instead of making compromise with unbelief."²⁸ Notice his prescribed hermeneutical procedures are grounded in historical theology, rather than literal grammatical-historical. In short, Van Til is marvelously consistent in his epistemological method until he prescribes historical theology as the orthodox hermeneutic, rather than literal grammatical-historical (an unfortunate contradiction of his own expertly stated first principles).

²⁸ Cornelius Van Til, *The New Hermeneutic* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 180.

Van Til's hermeneutic maneuver is not quite as overt as the RCC hermeneutic prescription that is emblematic of B+T, but it certainly requires that Scripture be viewed through the lens of tradition, and consequently illustrates a B+t methodology – the methodology employed particularly in Reformed/Covenant theology. Kevin DeYoung likewise illustrates the Covenant/Reformed starting place as (at least) little-t, tradition: “As a Christian I hope that my theology is open to correction, but as a minister I have to start somewhere. We all do. For me that means starting with Reformed theology and my confessional tradition and sticking with that unless I have really good reason not to.”²⁹ DeYoung's methodological reliance on systematic theology becomes an integral part of his hermeneutic. “Without a systematic theology how can you begin to know what to do with the eschatology of Ezekiel or the sacramental language in John 6 or the psalmist's insistence that he is righteous and blameless?”³⁰ The implications of DeYoung's hermeneutic are evident in his remarkably nonliteral handling of the 144,000 in Revelation 7 as the “entire community of the redeemed.”³¹ DeYoung understands the quantity simply as “a way of saying all God's people under the old and new covenant,”³² and he understands the entire context as “stylized to depict the totality of God's pure and perfectly redeemed servants from all time over all the earth.”³³

While Van Til and DeYoung do not attribute inspired authority to tradition (as does the RCC), their handling of Scripture does not reflect much practical difference. In practice, B+T and B+t are closely related.

Bible Plus Nothing (B+∅)

The related ideas of a completed canon and the superior reliability of revelation over personal experience are important bases for *sola scriptura* in understanding and in application. Peter illustrates the principle of revelation trumping personal experience when he explains that even though he had witnessed Christ in His glory at the transfiguration,³⁴ the prophetic word regarding Christ – or God's revelation – confirmed the issue.³⁵ What Peter says on this subject is important, because even if God did presently use experiential or sensory means, it would be secondary to His word. Peter also describes in those verses how God spoke to people – the Holy Spirit moved men to speak the word of God.³⁶ Certainly, God did speak to people in dreams and other ways.³⁷ And Paul agrees that all Scripture is God-breathed.³⁸ Still, in 1 Corinthians 13 Paul

²⁹ Kevin DeYoung, “Your Theological System Should Tell You How to Exegete,” The Gospel Coalition, February, 23, 2012, viewed at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/your-theological-system-should-tell-you-how-to-exegete/>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kevin DeYoung, “Theological Primer: The 144,000,” The Gospel Coalition, April 28, 2017, viewed at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-the-144000/>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Mt 16:28-17:2; 2 Pet 1:16-18.

³⁵ 2 Pet 1:19-21.

³⁶ 2 Pet 1:21.

³⁷ E.g., Heb 1:1.

³⁸ 2 Tim 3:16-17.

describes how the confirming gifts of tongues, prophecy, and knowledge – gifts whereby God spoke to people – would fulfill their purpose and come to a conclusion.

In a context describing the superiority of love,³⁹ Paul explains that the gift of tongues would cease on its own.⁴⁰ Tongues was a gift which enabled people to speak God's word in actual languages that the speaker didn't understand. This is illustrated in Acts 2:9-11, a passage which includes a list of at least sixteen different languages or dialects by which God used the disciples (and those who were with them) to proclaim God's gospel.

This gift served as a sign to unbelievers,⁴¹ to show that God had sent His Holy Spirit.⁴² Paul rebuked the Corinthian church for not utilizing the gift properly at times, and challenged them regarding the importance of love. After that commentary in 1 Corinthians, written in about 51 AD, the Bible never mentions the gift of tongues again – not even in the letter Paul wrote to that same church just a few months later. Very early in church history, the gift of tongues had fulfilled its purpose and ceased on its own, just as Paul indicated it would.

Partial prophecy and knowledge,⁴³ on the other hand, would continue until the *complete* would arrive,⁴⁴ at which time the partial – or incomplete – would be ended. Considering the Greek terminology and syntax of 13:9-10, the issue is not that prophecy and knowledge would be fulfilled by the coming of the complete,⁴⁵ but rather that partial⁴⁶ prophecy and knowledge would be ended by it. The simplest understanding of these comments by Paul, is that there would come a time when God's revealing through prophecy and words of knowledge would come to a conclusion – that He would have said all He had to say. It is evident that milestone is achieved at the conclusion of the book of Revelation, when Jesus leaves the reader expecting no further communication from God, and with only the remaining exception of the two prophets of Revelation 11, until the return of Christ.⁴⁷

Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that while God used many methods in former times to communicate, in these last days, He "has spoken to us in His Son." Jesus prepared His disciples for His ascension, telling them the Holy Spirit would come to guide them into all the truth.⁴⁸ Upon His departure, He reminded them to "make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."⁴⁹ The Holy Spirit fulfilled that ministry of guiding the disciples into all the truth, as Peter says, "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."⁵⁰ From a textually verifiable standpoint, Jesus' communication, through the Holy Spirit to His disciples, was finished at the

³⁹ 1 Cor 13:1-13.

⁴⁰ 13:8.

⁴¹ 1 Cor 14:22.

⁴² Acts 2:36-38, 10:45-46, 19:5-6.

⁴³ 1 Cor 13:9.

⁴⁴ 13:10.

⁴⁵ Greek, *to telion*.

⁴⁶ Greek, *ek merous*.

⁴⁷ Rev 22:18-20.

⁴⁸ Jn 16:13-14.

⁴⁹ Mt 28:20.

⁵⁰ 2 Pet 1:21.

end of the book of Revelation. If the closed canon provides clarity regarding the source of authority (God as revealed in the Bible) in a Biblical worldview, then the opening narrative provided in that canon models a hermeneutic pattern for how we should understand Scripture.

The Hermeneutic Precedent of Genesis and Job

In order to arrive at a *reliable and predictable approach* for interpreting Scriptures, the interpretive method ought to be exegetically derived from within the Scriptural text. Otherwise, there can be no claim to hermeneutic certainty, because any externally derived interpretive method can be preferred and applied simply by exerting presuppositions upon the text. In the case of an externally derived hermeneutic, presuppositions leading to that hermeneutic conclusion create a pre-understanding that predetermines meaning independent of the author's intentions. The outcome, in such a case, can be wildly different than what the author had in mind.

If the Bible is merely a collection of ancient stories, legends, and myth, interspersed with mildly historical accounts, then the stakes are not particularly high. The greatest damage we can inflict by a faulty hermeneutic method is of the same weight as misunderstanding the motivations and activities of Mark Twain's adventurous character, *Tom Sawyer*, for example. In such an instance we would simply fail to recognize the aesthetic virtues of a creative work. However, if the Bible constitutes an actual revelation from God, then it bears the very authority of the Author, Himself – an authority that extends to every aspect of life and conduct. These are high stakes, indeed. If we fail to engage the text with the interpretive approach intended by its Author, then we fail not just to appreciate aesthetic qualities, but we fail to grasp who God is, and what He intends for us to do.

It is incumbent, then, upon readers of the text to carefully derive hermeneutic method from the Scriptures themselves. Yet, this responsibility is complicated by an obvious absence of prescriptive material within the Biblical text that if present could direct readers toward a particular interpretive stance. In the absence of such prescriptive material, we examine here some descriptive elements from the book of Genesis, in order to discover whether or not there is actually a prevailing hermeneutic embedded in the text itself.

From the opening of Genesis to its conclusion, the book records roughly two thousand years of history. Further, Genesis alleges that these two thousand years are the *first years* of human history.⁵¹ Within that framework of chronology, the events in the book of Genesis account for the first 33% of our recorded six thousand year history and the first 50% of the four thousand years of Biblical history. *If Genesis were univocal regarding hermeneutic method*, that single voice would go a long way in helping us understand how the Author intended for us to interpret the Scriptures. Genesis would be a guiding light, providing the time-tested descriptive model foundational to our Scriptural hermeneutics.

In order to assess the hermeneutic method applied *within Genesis, during the times which the book describes*, we simply examine in Genesis the occurrences of God speaking and the

⁵¹ C.f., Gen 1:27 and 5:1.

responses of those who heard. The questions addressed here include whether or not God's initial audiences took Him *only* literally or whether they instead or additionally perceived that He intended a deeper meaning than what would be normally signified by the words that were verbally expressed. The responses are categorized as follows: Category 1 (C1) responses are those providing evidence that the initial speech act was intended for literal understanding only; category 2 (C2) responses are those providing evidence that the initial speech act was intended for any understanding beyond the literal meaning of the words verbally expressed. In eighty-four passages in Genesis, we observe at least seventy-one C1's and not a single C2.⁵²

Other than the eighty-four verses in Genesis evidencing a model for interpreting Scripture, there are ten similar passages in Job that provide a secondary support to the monolithic hermeneutic method evident thus far in Genesis. In each instance of Divine speech acts in Job, the speaker is identified as "the Lord."⁵³ In these ten verses, we find ten C1's and zero C2's. Notably, one of the C1 responses is from God, Himself.⁵⁴ Job's record of God's speech acts and the responses indicates there is no deviation from the pattern modeled in Genesis. Further, Job's response to God's use of metaphorical language in chapters 40-41 indicates that the Divine use of figurative language did not change the expectation that what was verbally expressed should be interpreted in a basic, face-value, common-sense way. In short, the addition of figurative language did not result in any adjustment to the hermeneutic method.

In examination of the ninety-four passages in Genesis and Job that record Divine speech acts, the evidence is overwhelming (*eighty-one C1's to absolutely zero C2's*) that God intended for His words to be taken at face value, using a plain-sense interpretive approach. The hermeneutic method that reflects this straightforward methodology has become known as the *literal grammatical historical hermeneutic*. This method recognizes that verbal expression has meaning rooted in and inseparable from the grammatical and historical context of the language used, and that these components require that readers be consistent in applying the interpretive method in their study of the Scriptures.

Because of the two-thousand-year precedent evident in Genesis and Job, any departure from the simplicity of this method bears a strong exegetical burden of proof, requiring that there be *explicit exegetical support for any change one might perceive as necessary in handling later Scriptures*. Absent any such exegetical data, we can conclude that (1) hermeneutic methodology for understanding Scripture is not arbitrary but is instead plainly modeled, and that (2) later Scriptures should be understood in light of the hermeneutic precedent provided by Genesis and Job.

⁵² Christopher Cone, *Priority in Biblical Hermeneutics and Theological Method* (Raymore, MO: Exegetica Publishing, 2017), 17-36.

⁵³ Heb. *Yahweh*.

⁵⁴ Job 40:6.

EXTRA-BIBLICAL MATERIAL IN TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Paul describes transformation as a process occurring in the life of all believers (even the immature Corinthians).⁵⁵ He prescribes that the believer be active in this process of transformation through the renewing of the mind.⁵⁶ Transformative learning, from Paul's description and prescription, would simply be *the renewing of the mind*, and would not be merely a mental thing, but also one that involves the spirit.⁵⁷ It would involve putting aside the old man, with respect to its manner of conduct,⁵⁸ and putting on the new man,⁵⁹ which is designed for good conduct.⁶⁰ For Paul, then, transformation involves *a mental process that effects the spirit, engages the will, and is manifested in conduct*. This transformative renewal is designed to be a practical outworking of the position reality of what was accomplished by the Holy Spirit in believers at the completed work of their positional salvation (justification).⁶¹

While not addressing spiritual implications of education and learning, Jack Mezirow observes that *meaning* is often absent in learning models. He suggests, "There is need for a learning theory that can explain how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experiences...These understandings must be explained in the context of adult development and social goals."⁶² Mezirow does recognize that learning should be more than a mental process, and that there must be some context and purpose for the learning if it is to be impactful and transformative. He further noted that a learning theory centered on meaning could provide a firm philosophical foundation for goal setting, needs assessment, program development, instruction, and research.⁶³ For Mezirow, this theory of transformative learning suggests a robust pedagogy for change. He recognizes the role of hermeneutics in the learning process – implying that learners must be able to effectively exegete their experience in order to achieve their desired outcomes. Mezirow observes, "it is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance."⁶⁴ Appropriate interpretation and explanation are necessary for transformation to take place.

Beyond that, "All transformative learning involves taking action to implement insights derived from critical reflection."⁶⁵ For Mezirow, transformation is first hermeneutic, then practical. Despite his inattention to the Biblical roots of transformative learning, he has brought to the forefront a theory of learning that is more holistic than the (Friere-coined) deposit method of learning, and in its more comprehensive impact on the person, comes closer in scope to a Biblical model of learning. Consequently, this writer uses the term transformative learning (which Mezirow popularized), to refer to the holistic learning process described and prescribed in

⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

⁵⁶ Romans 12:2.

⁵⁷ Ephesians 4:23.

⁵⁸ Ephesians 4:22.

⁵⁹ Ephesians 4:24.

⁶⁰ Ephesians 2:10.

⁶¹ Titus 3:5.

⁶² Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco, CA:Jossey-Bass, 1991), xii.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., xiii.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 225.

Scripture, and not to refer directly to Mezirow's ideas, though there are similarities in the two learning frameworks.

Three Categories of Extra-Biblical Resources and Their Degree of Complementarity in the Transformative Process

In B+T, extra-biblical materials are often perceived as divinely authorized and animated to cooperate with Scripture. Some of these include the Tradition of the church, the bread and wine of Eucharist in transubstantiation, and the Pope's *ex cathedra* proclamations. These do not merely facilitate a setting in which transformation can occur, but rather they are a necessary part – *co-equal with Scripture* – in transformation. In B+t, some extra-biblical materials are used *as the lens through which to view Scripture*, and thus as a hermeneutic device for undergirding transformative learning. While theoretically these hermeneutic keys are not attributed divine authority, in practice they are given the weight of the divine. However, in the B+Ø approach, the Bible is the exclusive source of authority as God's revelation. While Christ is, Himself, both the revealed God and the revelation of God, the Bible is His commissioned work to record His instructions for those who would have transformed lives, and the text provides its own hermeneutic principles for the reader's understanding. Still, even within Biblical contexts it is evident that extra-revelatory resources can legitimately function in complementary roles, helping to provide a setting for transformative learning.

Experiences in General (2 Timothy 3:10-11)

Paul reminded Timothy of the value not only of Paul's teaching, but also of his conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and suffering. While he never implies that these bear any revelatory authority, Paul cites particular happenings that Timothy observed, and evokes illustrations in Timothy's memory of Paul's exhibiting the fruits of transformation in those events. Illustration and remembrance are part of Paul's pedagogy in training Timothy. They are not, in themselves, the content that Timothy needs to be passing along,⁶⁶ but they are tools that Paul uses to help Timothy contextualize that content.

Bread and Resources for Sustenance (Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3)

During His temptation at the hands of Satan, Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, reminding readers that God had provided bread (manna) to His people, but that bread was not the source of their sustenance, God was. This was an important lesson that even when we lack physical sustenance, we can remain confident in Him, for He has provided His word – that which equips us. The believer's strength and hope, then, is not found in physical provision, but in reliance upon Him based on what He has said. This event was a vivid illustration of the sufficiency of God's word. Still, there was value placed on the physical sustenance. God did, after all, provide manna for the people of Israel. He does indeed understand the physical needs of the people He created.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ 2 Timothy 2:2.

⁶⁷ Matthew 6:30.

The challenge Jesus explains in Matthew 6 is the exclusivity of authority. One cannot serve two masters.⁶⁸ In the same way, I believe it is an appropriate application of that principle to say that we cannot hold to the authority of His word, while also pursuing another resource as an equal authority. We must serve one or the other. At the same time, while Jesus critiques the pursuit of money, He recognizes that it has an appropriate context in life.⁶⁹ After all, it is not money that is the root of all sorts of evil – it is the love of money,⁷⁰ and the believer’s character ought to be free from that love.⁷¹ In the same way, it is not food or drink or clothing that is the problem – it is the idolatry that results when we pursue those things rather than Him.⁷² But if these things are used in their appropriate contexts, then they can be very good and useful in helping us achieve the big picture things He intends for us to accomplish.

Helps Beyond Scripture (Matthew 4:11)

At the conclusion of Jesus’ temptation, angels ministered to Him. This is a remarkable happening, and one that is not presented in detail. Still, it is evident that Jesus had declined Satan’s aid, instead focusing on the Scriptures as the way through the temptation. The angelic help that was present afterward seems an affirmation that God indeed understands the importance of physical needs, and has designed that those who would follow Him – as Christ exemplified – should consider their physical needs as secondary in priority to the need to understand and properly apply God’s word.

There are other similar instances in which extra-biblical helps are offered. James suggests that when one is struggling and is sick, prayer of the elders should be accompanied by an anointing of oil.⁷³ There seems an acknowledgment that medicinal aids should not be ignored, but do play a role. Paul doesn’t send Timothy to Scripture nor does he encourage Timothy to pray about his stomach challenges – Paul tells Timothy to drink some wine.⁷⁴ Paul also challenges Timothy to understand that while godliness is valuable for everything, physical exercise is worth little. Not nothing – but little.⁷⁵ God didn’t teleport Jonah to the shore (like he seemingly teleported Philip to an evangelistic appointment⁷⁶), he used a sea-creature to carry Jonah to shore.⁷⁷ Jesus didn’t simply miraculously fill the stomachs of the thousands who were hungry, he used some bread and fish as a key ingredient of His miracle.⁷⁸ Jesus didn’t simply levitate or fly across the water, rather He chose to walk *on* it.⁷⁹ These are just a few of many, many examples of how God chose to employ His physical creation to complement or provide a context for the application of His word.

⁶⁸ 6:24.

⁶⁹ Matthew 25:27.

⁷⁰ 1 Timothy 6:10.

⁷¹ Hebrews 13:5.

⁷² E.g., Mark 7:19, Acts 10:11-15, 1 Corinthians 6:13, 1 Timothy 5:23.

⁷³ James 5:13.

⁷⁴ 1 Timothy 5:23.

⁷⁵ 1 Timothy 4:8.

⁷⁶ Acts 8:39-40.

⁷⁷ Jonah 1:17, 2:10.

⁷⁸ John 6:1-14.

⁷⁹ Matthew 14:25.

Consequently, it would not seem shocking that while we should not value those extra-biblical aspects at the level we value His word, there is still value found in them. B+T would value them as equally necessary. B+t would value the extra-biblical as a hermeneutical aid. B+∅ would value them only insofar as the literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic will allow.

CASE STUDY: APPLICATIONS OF EXTRA-BIBLICAL RESOURCES IN PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING

Paul encourages transformative learning in several contexts in 1 Thessalonians. In 2:11 he describes “exhorting (*parakalountes*), encouraging (*paramouthoumenoi*), and imploring (*marturomenoi*)” believers to walk appropriately. These three are modes of communication for facilitating transformation through mental processes that effect the spirit, engage the will, and are manifested in conduct – the believer’s walk. In 5:14-15 Paul exhorts (*parakaloumen*)⁸⁰ believers to engage with one another in several particular ways: admonish (*noutheteite*) the unruly, encourage (*paramutheisthe*) the fainthearted, help (*antechesthe*) the weak, be patient (*makrothumeite*) with all, see (*orate*) that no one repays evil for evil, and pursue (*diokete*) good for one another and for all.

These six imperatives are indicative of speech and action that is helpful for the growth of believers. Three of them could be considered forms of Biblical counseling (admonishing, encouraging, helping),⁸¹ one describes the manner in which that counseling is done (with patience), and the remaining two pertain to outcomes of Biblical counseling (seeing that no one responds to evil with evil, and pursuing the good). While we don’t find the term “counseling” used in the NT, exactly, if we are using the term to describe believers’ admonishing, encouraging, and helping of other believers, then we can see a ready correlation between transformative teaching/learning and a Biblical approach to counseling. Further, Paul’s exhortation does not seem to limit the scope of benefit to only believers – he urges believers to always be pursuing the good of one another *and* everyone. He seems to distinguish between believers (one another) and unbelievers everyone else). It is evident from these passages that a Biblical approach to counseling for transformation would be focused on believers but could also extend to unbelievers. Beyond the scope of counseling as including believers and unbelievers it is helpful to understand the prescribed tools for counseling, and how the three perspectives (B+T, B+t, and B+∅) might define and apply the tools.

B+T: One Common Method, Two Disparate Conclusions

As the fundamental principle of B+T is the equality of the Bible and Tradition, there are two iterations of B+T that are discernible here, both sharing a presuppositional methodology.⁸² One would be that of the RCC (this approach will be distinguished hereafter by the label B+T/RCC), and the other would represent those who equate the Bible and popular findings that

⁸⁰ Using the same verb as in 2:11.

⁸¹ Of course, these are not the only forms of Biblical counseling, but they do seem to exemplify essential techniques of a Biblical approach to transformative learning.

⁸² That is to say that both work from the same presupposition that the Bible and Tradition (or the doctrines of the field) have essentially equal authority.

are considered to be scientific (hereafter referred to as B+T/PSP, for popular scientific perspective).

The B+T/RCC approach is well illustrated by Pope Pius XII. He first acknowledges the distinct metaphysical conclusions of the RCC and secular humanist perspectives:

Man is entirely the work of the Creator. Even though psychology does not take this into account in its researches, in its experiments and clinical applications, it is always on the work of the Creator that it labors; this consideration is essential from the religious and moral point of view, but as long as the theologian and the psychologist remain objective, no conflict need be feared, and both can proceed in their own fields according to the principles of their science.⁸³

Further, he affirms the value of the science of psychology, noting that, “Tests and other psychological methods of investigation have contributed enormously to the knowledge of the human personality and have been of considerable service to it.”⁸⁴ At the same time he recognizes there are limits to the authority that psychology possesses. He asserts that “Moral law teaches that scientific demands do not by themselves alone justify the indiscriminate use of psychological techniques and methods, even by serious psychologists and for useful objectives.”⁸⁵ Psychological methodology is subject to moral law (which is derived by nature, revelation, and reason all working in concert). To solidify that point, Pius adds,

Psychology as a science can only make its demands prevail insofar as the echelon of values and higher norms to which We have referred and which includes right, justice equity, respect of human dignity, and well ordered charity for oneself and for others, is respected. There is nothing mysterious in these norms. They are clear for any honest conscience and are formulated by natural reasoning and by Revelation. Inasmuch as they are observed, there is nothing to prevent the just demands of the science of psychology in favor of modern methods of investigation from being asserted.⁸⁶

While these papal assertions correctly subject psychology to theistic metaphysics and to moral law, the metaphysics and morals are still co-written by Text and Tradition. This allows room for equal input from the discipline or the science, along with the Text and the Tradition. Michael Horne, Catholic Charities Director of Clinical Services, identifies a distinctiveness of Catholic counseling found in the striving “to integrate the Catholic faith into all our services.”⁸⁷ Catholic Therapist, John Chavez, also advocates an integrative approach, observing that,

⁸³ Pope Pius XII, “Applied Psychology” addressed to the Rome Congress of the International Association of Applied Psychology, April 10, 1958, I3a, viewed at <https://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P12APPSY.HTM>.

⁸⁴ Ibid., II.

⁸⁵ Ibid, II1.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Michael Horne, “Catholic Counseling and What Makes Us Different” Arlington Catholic Charities, June, 29, 2016, viewed at <http://arlingtoncatholiccharities.com/1131-2/>.

...most clinical psychologists favor a traditional approach to treatment relying on their particular theoretical orientations...Many of these orientations have proven to be effective both for mental illness and daily life problems...However, as a Catholic clinical psychologist, I have not found it always helpful to rely exclusively on traditional methods of therapy. Instead I have found that using both traditional and Catholic-based approaches to therapy are much more effective.⁸⁸

The B+T/RCC approach is integrationist in the sense that Catholic therapists “employ the same empirically-supported psychotherapeutic techniques as mainstream psychotherapy,”⁸⁹ as long as they don’t directly contradict the tenets of Text and Tradition.

The B+T/PSP approach, on the other hand, borrows from secular humanism in some key areas, and also deviates in some foundational aspects. Where secular humanism attempts consistency in applying worldview to a discipline, is transparent in its denial of God and spiritual things, and gambles everything on the naturalistic premise and the resulting biopsychosocial model, B+T/PSP holds to the existence of God and the supernatural, and ultimately dispenses with consistency in favor of an appealing middle ground. B+T/PSP subjects all but God’s existence (and the idea that God revealed Himself) to popular scientific standards, thus perceiving many theological conclusions through the lens of repeatability and provability. More than a few of these conclusions are compatible with materialistic rather than Biblically theistic thinking. Consequently, prescriptions are rooted in materialistic-friendly descriptions. In B+T/PSP thought, there is little to dislike of contemporary mainstream psychology beside the basic anti-supernatural premise. The problem here is that the premise simply invalidates the Bible in its entirety. I refer to this as *The Oil and Water Problem* – if presuppositions and methods don’t align, how can the conclusions possibly be expected to align?

B+t: The Hopeful Middle Ground

Clinical Psychologist Sarah Rainer illustrates the hopeful middle ground of the B+t approach. It is notably integrationist, and virtually identical to B+T/RCC. She recognizes that,

The intricacies of the human brain, the environmental influences on our personality, and the social and culture impact on our lives remind me that pathology cannot simply be reduced to issues of morality or sin. On the other hand, as a Christian, I acknowledge that all humans are inherently separated from God. This separation causes disorder, sin, and disease of every kind... I propose that Christian mental health professionals operate on a middle ground, the bio/psycho/social/spiritual model, which considers both our dignity and depravity as humans.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ John Chavez, “Catholic-Based Psychotherapy” CatholicTherapists.com, viewed at <https://www.catholictherapists.com/articles/catholic-based-psychotherapy-341>.

⁸⁹ Ryan Howes, “The Varieties of Religious Therapy: Catholicism: Psychology According to Catholic Scholars,” *Psychology Today*, Sept. 21, 2011, viewed at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-therapy/201109/the-varieties-religious-therapy-catholicism>.

⁹⁰ Sarah Rainer, “The Integration of Psychology and Christianity: A Guest Post by Sarah Rainer,” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 25, 2014, viewed at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/september/concerning-psychology-and-christianity-guest-post-by-sarah-.html>.

At first glance this middle ground looks and sounds like B+T, in that mental and environmental issues seem to share equal prominence with sin and depravity. However, she does clarify an order of priority: “The use of some secular therapy interventions is not inherently wrong; the overreliance and/or independent use of these techniques is... When research and Christianity contradict each other, we follow the latter.”⁹¹ But while asserting the superiority of the “B” over the “t,” the model that Rainer proposes seems to contradict that assertion. Whereas secular humanism operates on a biopsychosocial model, Rainer proposes a bio/psycho/social/spiritual one. The spiritual component is segregated, and it is last. This model seems to simply add a component to the biopsychosocial model, rather than to recognize that the Bible presents humanity as a spiritual being who possesses the other traits.⁹² This is the tension evident within an integrationist approach. It does attempt to utilize all sources of knowledge, but has difficulty in prioritizing. It chooses the Bible when there are clear contradictions, but may not prioritize the Bible when there are not contradictions (e.g., bio/psycho/social/spiritual model).

It also seems to underemphasize Biblical training. If the spiritual issues are equally as important as the other issues, then shouldn’t a therapist have an equal amount of training in understanding the Biblical metaphysic and all of what that implies? Other issues worthy of further investigation here are the superimposing of brain and mind illness, definitions in pathology, and perspectives on the environment and culture as non-moral. Once again, the Oil and Water Problem seem to be in view.

Christian Psychology

To resolve some of these integrative tensions, some within the B+t community have advocated a “Christian Psychology” application, which develops a separate stream of psychology science within the Christian faith tradition. It does this by establishing and relying on validity of instruments within the tradition itself: methodology is a combination of conceptual historical and empirical research. It asserts that the “Foundational commitment of Jesus’ psychology is to love (unconditional positive regard),”⁹³ that research supports the idea that praying and meditative communion with God has beneficial effects,⁹⁴ and that “Christian beliefs about sin and about grace broadly predict better psychological adjustment.”⁹⁵ This brand of Christian Psychology is focused not on deconstruction of secular theories but construction of its own. Roberts adds, “If a psychology is at heart an ethical system, an ideal of human functioning with corollary ideas about what’s wrong with people and how they can move from dysfunction to better function, then Christianity has always been in the psychology business, and should take its proper place

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Genesis 2:7, Adam became a living soul (*nephesh*), In Job 7:11, Job possesses both spirit (*ruach*) and soul (*nephesh*).

⁹³ Robert Roberts and Paul Watson, “Christian Psychology,” October 17, 2013, viewed at <https://prezi.com/96xraoi3vjjja/christian-psychology-robert-c-roberts-paul-j-watson/?webgl=0>.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

among the various psychologies that are being offered today.”⁹⁶ Roberts finds it troubling that if psychology is scientific at its core, then there should not be a diversity of modern psychologies. He notes that, “we do not see eight or ten rival chemistries all operating in the same decade so that the student has to study them and choose which one he likes best.”⁹⁷ Roberts observes that “Physics and chemistry are scientific at their conceptual core, while psychologies—at least the kind that we call personality theories and clinical models—are scientific on the periphery.”⁹⁸ If psychology is only peripherally scientific, then, “every psychology is at its core an ethical-spiritual conceptual system that is less than fully dictated by mere observations of human beings,”⁹⁹ and “when we study psychology we are always studying “ideology.”¹⁰⁰ While this approach has the advantages of understanding that psychology is not in itself a hard science¹⁰¹ and it engages in research to positively construct a Christian psychology, the familiar disadvantages limit the potential of this approach: tradition and historical perspectives (historical theology) are elevated to prescriptive status, and this model is more focused on a “Christian” rather than Biblical psychology and worldview.

Nouthetic Counseling

Another B+t approach that has become popular in the last thirty years is Nouthetic Counseling. Jay Adams introduces this system that he pioneered:

“While the name is new, the sort of counseling done by nouthetic counselors is not. From Biblical times onward, God's people have counseled nouthetically. The word itself is Biblical. It comes from the Greek noun *nouthesia* (verb: *noutheteo*). The word, used in the New Testament primarily by the apostle Paul, is translated “admonish, correct or instruct.” This term, which probably best describes Biblical counseling, occurs in such passages as Romans 15:14: I myself am convinced about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and competent to counsel one another...The three ideas found in the word *nouthesia* are confrontation, concern, and change...To put it simply, *nouthetic counseling consists of lovingly confronting people out of deep concern in order to help them make those changes that God requires.*¹⁰²

Adams’ description of Nouthetic methodology is distinctive, and worth repeating here:

By confrontation we mean that one Christian personally gives counsel to another from the Scriptures. He does not confront him with his own ideas or the ideas of others. He

⁹⁶ Robert Roberts, “Redeeming Psychology Means Recovering the Christian Psychology of the Past,” *Responding*, June 1, 2009, viewed at <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/redeeming-psychology-means-recovering-the-christian-psychology-of-the-past/>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Though there are certainly physiological scientific factors [e.g., brain science] which it engages.

¹⁰² Jay Adams, “What is “Nouthetic” Counseling?” Institute for Nouthetic Studies, viewed at <http://www.nouthetic.org/about-ins/what-is-nouthetic-counseling>.

limits his counsel strictly to that which may be found in the Bible, believing that “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and useful for teaching, for conviction, for correction and for disciplined training in righteousness in order to fit and fully equip the man from God for every good task.*” (2 Timothy 3:16,17)...The nouthetic counselor believes that all that is needed to help another person love God and his neighbor as he should, as the verse above indicates, may be found in the Bible....By concern we mean that counseling is always done for the benefit of the counselee. His welfare is always in view in Biblical counseling. The apostle Paul put it this way: “I am not writing these things to shame you, but to counsel you as my dear children” (1 Corinthians 4:14)... Plainly, the familial nature of the word *noutheteo* appears in this verse. There is always a warm, family note to biblical counseling which is done among the saints of God who seek to help one another become more like Christ...Christians consider their counseling to be a part of the sanctification process whereby one Christian helps another get through some difficulty that is hindering him from moving forward in his spiritual growth...By change we mean that counseling is done because there is something in another Christian's life that fails to meet the biblical requirements and that, therefore, keeps him from honoring God...All counseling—Biblical or otherwise—attempts change.¹⁰³

Adams emphasize that only Biblical counselors know what a counselee should become, and that the result of counseling should be that the counselee should look more like Christ.¹⁰⁴ Even though Adams’ approach is decidedly behavioristic, he does acknowledge that it is God who makes the changes in the person “as His word is ministered in the power of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁵

The greatest advantage of the Nouthetic approach is that it truly attempts to exalt the sufficiency of Scripture. Further, it rejects mainstream, integrated, and Christian psychology. However, there are some significant disadvantages: Nouthetic is imbalanced, in that all counseling is considered to be admonishment; it is very behavioristic and sin focused; It abandons the discipline of psychology altogether; it is rooted in the B+t of contemporary Reformed or Covenant theology. Each of these concerns is significant enough to warrant discussion here.\

Problem #1: Admonishment ≠ All Counseling

In a Venn diagram illustrating this assertion, the two circles would be completely overlapping (Diagram A.), but this doesn’t square with the Biblical data. There are eleven NT instances of *νουθετέω/νουθεσία*. Five are descriptive.¹⁰⁶ Six of these instances are prescriptive,¹⁰⁷ and in several of these *νουθετέω/νουθεσία* is considered *with other verbs*, so there is no exegetical warrant for asserting that all counseling is simply nouthetic.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Acts 20:31-32 (admonish and commend), Romans 15:14, 1 Corinthians 4:14, 10:11, and 2 Thessalonians 3:15.

¹⁰⁷ Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 1:28, 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 5:14, and Titus 3:10.



Diagram A.

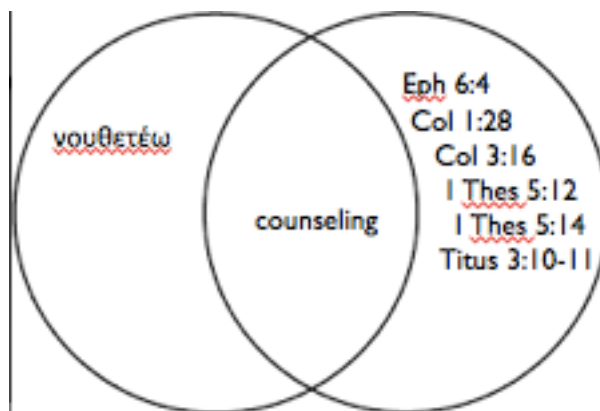


Diagram B.

Problem #2: The Behavioristic Sin Focus

Notice the emphasis on works as separate from and *preceding* honoring God: “By change we mean that counseling is done because there is something in another Christian's life that fails to meet the biblical requirements and that, therefore, keeps him from honoring God.”¹⁰⁸ Again, we have an exegetical problem. Note that Job was not guilty of sin, but ignorance.¹⁰⁹ Further, we are told to reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned,¹¹⁰ whereas a wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.¹¹¹ In other words, it is the wise man who increases in learning, and his increase is not connected to the eradication of sin behaviors, but rather to a process of (transformative) learning.

Problem #3: Abandons the Discipline of Psychology

Psychology is not a worldview, it is a discipline or field of study, and more specifically, it is the study of the mind, soul. While all perspectives on psychology are grounded in worldview, there is one worldview perspective that is correct: who knows the mind and soul better than the Creator? The Bible is the authoritative source for knowledge of the mind and soul, thus the primary textbook for proper psychology (Biblical psychology). There are truths outside of the Bible in many disciplines that we find useful (logic, math, physics, propositional truths, descriptions, etc.). These are extra-biblical, subject to Scripture, and still useful. They are not to be equated (integrated) with, but to be interpreted by the authority of Scripture. Adams understands the challenge:

“In my understanding, attempted integration of the Scriptures with worldly counseling beliefs, methods, and/or techniques inevitably means that in order to make them agree, the Scriptures are bent to fit the non-scriptural material that the counselor attempts to

¹⁰⁸ Adams, “What is “Nouthetic” Counseling?”

¹⁰⁹ Job 1:22, 2:10, 40:3-5, 42:1-6.

¹¹⁰ Titus 3:10-11.

¹¹¹ Proverbs 1:5.

integrate with it. I believe the task is impossible without ending in a non-scriptural method.”¹¹²

However, by throwing out the entire discipline of psychology, the consequence is that Christians have abandoned the study of the mind and the soul to those who deny the Creator. Christians have doomed an entire field of study to be populated by falsehood.

Problem #4: Built on a Covenant Platform

This problem is discernible in three specific ways. First, the B+t approach is evident in the methodology of Reformed/Covenant theology: begin with theology and exegete in light of that (incidentally, that is eerily similar to the RCC hermeneutic). DeYoung teaches that “Your theological system should tell you how to exegete.”¹¹³ Adams is transparent about how theological pre-commitments impact his interpretation:

If a matter has been settled by the church, it is wrong to stir up the thinking of the general population of Christians about any change in such long-settled theology unless it is clearly an exegetically-supported change that can be demonstrated to be a genuine advance in thought that improves upon accepted Reformation doctrine.¹¹⁴

A second problematic aspect of the Nouthetic counseling approach is that the limited atonement view (which Adams asserts is central to the theology that undergirds Nouthetic counseling) makes it impossible to counsel an unbeliever that Jesus died for them.¹¹⁵ Adams remarks,

As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, for they cannot say that. No man knows except Christ himself who are his elect for whom he died.¹¹⁶

A third problem is the mixed message on sanctification, that godliness comes through self-discipline, and sanctification by works of the Law. Adams illustrates this tension, saying,

Discipline is the secret of godliness... You must learn to discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness... discipline means work; it means sustained daily effort.... An athlete becomes an expert only by years of hard practice... [Taking up the cross] means putting to death the old life patterns of the old man.... This is what it means to discipline oneself for godliness. It means to continue to say ‘no’ to self and to say ‘yes’ to Christ every day until

¹¹² Jay Adams, “Competent to Counsel: An Interview With Jay Adams,” Ligonier Ministries, Feb 1, 2014, viewed at <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/competent-counsel-interview-jay-adams/>.

¹¹³ DeYoung “Your Theological System Should Tell You How to Exegete.”

¹¹⁴ Jay Adams, “If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments,” Institute For Nouthetic Studies, Sept. 30, 2011, viewed at <http://www.nouthetic.org/blog/?p=5169>.

¹¹⁵ Christopher Cone, “Culinary Calvinism: Considering Jay Adams’ Tulipburger,” August 7, 2017, viewed at <http://www.drcone.com/2017/08/07/culinary-calvinism-considering-jay-adams-tulipburger/>.

¹¹⁶ Jay Adams, “Evangelism and Counseling,” *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling*, EPub Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

one by one all of the old habitual ways are replaced by new ones. It means that by daily endeavor to follow God's Son, one finds at length that doing so is more 'natural' than not doing so...If you practice what God tells you to do, the obedient life will become a part of you. There is no simple, quick, easy way to instant godliness.¹¹⁷

Paul seems to take a different tact in several passages in his Letter to the Galatians:

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit are you being perfected by the flesh?¹¹⁸

But now that faith has come we are no longer under a tutor.¹¹⁹

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.¹²⁰

You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?¹²¹

But I say walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh...But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law.¹²²

Adams is to be commended for seeking a return to Biblical authority and sufficiency. He made great strides in drawing people to the Scriptures to find their solutions. However, as is the case in any reformation, there often remains the residue of the old and faulty, even as there is an attempt to refine. The intention here is not to castigate Adams, but rather to challenge us to refine, understanding the work Adams has done, deconstruct our understanding of psychology and counseling, and rebuild it not on B+t, but on B+Ø.

B+Ø Applied to Psychology and Counseling

Paul challenges the Colossians to be sure that no one takes them "captive through the philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."¹²³ It is important to note that this is not a blanket condemnation of philosophy, but rather an indictment of *the* philosophy that is according to things other than Christ. It is *that kind* of philosophy that captures and enslaves. On the other hand, Paul is desiring that the Colossians would have a correct philosophy – one that is according to Christ. That philosophy is rooted in a proper mindset,¹²⁴ and based on the doctrinal

¹¹⁷ Jay Adams, *Godliness Through Discipline* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1983), 2,3,5-6.

¹¹⁸ Galatians 3:2-3.

¹¹⁹ 3:25.

¹²⁰ 5:1.

¹²¹ 5:7.

¹²² 5:16-18.

¹²³ Colossians 2:8.

¹²⁴ 3:1-4.

and practical elements discussed in Paul's Letter to the Colossians, it could be described as *a mental posture that effects the spirit, engages the will, and is manifested in conduct*. In other words, Paul is advocating the right kind of philosophy, which we could say is the product of transformative learning, and we could add that Biblical counseling could play a significant role in that process, because of the content Paul provides to help us understand what Biblical counseling would look like.

But Biblical counseling is a practical outworking – a prescriptive activity – based on descriptions found in the Bible. In a worldview context, the prescriptive requires a descriptive – there ought to be an *is* upon which the *ought* relies. That descriptive *is* can be understood as the Biblical teaching on metaphysics (the nature of reality) as it pertains to what a person is, what a person needs, and how a person can get what they need. This is within a subset of metaphysics called anthropology, and is a subset of anthropology, that we could call psychology – the study of the human soul or mind. It is that Biblical teaching on these aspects of personhood that should govern our prescriptions toward transformative teaching and learning.

Now, some perceive psychology as a humanistic system of teaching that denies the Creator and operates from the vantage point that humanity is merely matter and energy. But that is not *psychology*. That would be a secular humanistic psychology. Psychology is itself a discipline – nothing more than a field of study. It is not a worldview. But in our times the discipline of psychology has been so overrun by the worldview of secular humanism, that it seems impossible to extricate the discipline from the philosophies that are not according to Christ. Our job is to understand where the content for an accurate psychology is derived. How we answer that question will determine the kind of counseling we will be doing, and from what vantage point. Psychology is not an extra-biblical resource. Psychology is simply the component within metaphysics that provides the *is* to ground the *ought*. The bases for the worldview (epistemology as well as other aspects of metaphysics) will ultimately predetermine the tenets of the psychology. Psychology is a discipline that is populated by the foundational principles of the worldview. Thus, while psychology is not a worldview, it is inextricable from the worldview that defines it. It is therefore incumbent upon counselors who seek to be Biblical to have a thoroughgoing Biblical psychology.

From a B+Ø perspective, the tool needed for this type of transformative teaching/learning is clearly and simply Scripture. Paul is clear about the sufficiency of Scripture for the equipping of believers,¹²⁵ and for the enlightening of unbelievers.¹²⁶ Undoubtedly, *there is no need for extra-biblical resources in either of these process*, however, there is also no prohibition, and considering the examples experience, resources for sustenance, and helps employed beyond Scripture, we can see some advantage to the proper utilization of extra-biblical tools. Experiences (in the form of illustration and remembrance, for example), tools of sustenance (including medical aids where needed), and helps beyond Scripture (potentially including models, and methods – including scientific – that are observed through the lens of Scripture) may be employed.

Additionally, B+Ø provides modeling for assessment of when extra-biblical can be most helpfully engaged to complement Biblical content. Paul's Acts 17 evangelistic episode in Athens records one such model. First, in 17:22-23 Paul shows familiarity with Greek culture and an ability

¹²⁵ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

¹²⁶ 2 Timothy 3:15.

to dialogue from within that framework. He appeals to a specific point of cultural ignorance in which to inject gospel truth. Then in 17:28 he invokes a line from Aratus' *Phaenomena*, a popular Greek poem. Paul engages with popular culture to meet the Athenians where they are with the truth of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In other contexts Paul reminds his readers that "all things are permissible, but not all things edify."¹²⁷ He challenges them to think on things that are worthy,¹²⁸ and to speak only those things that are effective for meeting the need of the moment and for building up the house.¹²⁹ The writer of Hebrews encourages believers to "consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds."¹³⁰ These are transformative teaching and learning activities, and they don't involve integrating a Biblical approach with extra-biblical concepts, but rather undergirding our entire worldview on the words of Scripture.

(Reformed) Biblical counselor, Jeff Forrey summarizes well the distinctiveness of this approach versus the integrative approach:

Perhaps...we could say there is a need for reinterpretation as Christians consider the claims made by mainstream psychologists. And these two processes are different. "Integration" assumes a *continuity* between secular and biblical worldview presuppositions that cannot be assumed to exist. "Reinterpretation" assumes a *discontinuity* between the two worldviews that requires a different way of understanding concepts or theories in relationship to what the Bible teaches.¹³¹

I would describe this as infusion versus refraction. Infusion (think of the process of brewing coffee) can be passive and distortive. One ingredient is received by another, resulting in a third product. Biblical thinking can be infused with secular psychology, integrated psychology, even Christian psychology, or Nouthetic psychology. But what we are after is refraction. Refraction can be active and corrective, allowing the observer to observe accurately. The Bible is the refractive lens through which to interpret and reinterpret all knowledge of the mind/soul. And before we can counsel Biblically, we must have an understanding of the Biblical psychology.

This approach has the advantage of seeking to view all knowledge through the lens of Scripture, and to subject all knowledge to the authority of Scripture. It encourages science and research within the field of psychology. It offers a Biblical balance of description and prescription. Of course, if the Bible is unreliable, then the refractive power of Scripture is distortive rather than corrective, but the epistemological premise of the B+Ø approach is that God's word is authoritative and sufficient for our understanding, for our equipping, and for our practice. There are many extra-biblical resources that we can employ, but in seeking out how and when to do that, we mustn't lose sight of the one reliable constant that God has provided for us – the Bible.

¹²⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:23.

¹²⁸ Philippians 4:8.

¹²⁹ Ephesians 4:29.

¹³⁰ Hebrews 10:24.

¹³¹ Jeff Forrey, "A Response to "The Integration of Christianity and Psychology: A Guest Post by Sarah Rainer," Biblical Counseling Coalition, October 27, 2014, viewed at <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2014/10/27/a-response-to-the-integration-of-christianity-and-psychology-a-guest-post-by-sarah-rainer/>.

