

The End of "Christian Psychology"

We begin by explaining the title of this book. Quotes around *Christian psychology* indicate that there is really no "Christian psychology." What is called "Christian psychology" is comprised of the same confusion of contradictory theories and techniques as secular psychology. Professional psychologists and psychiatrists who profess Christianity have simply borrowed the theories and techniques from secular psychology. They practice what they consider a perfect blend of psychology and Christianity. However, they use the same psychology as non-Christian psychologists and psychiatrists. They use theories and techniques contrived by such men as Freud, Jung, Adler, Fromm, Maslow, Rogers, Ellis, Glasser, Harris, Janov, all of whom we critique in this present volume and none of whom embraced Christianity or developed a psychological system from the Word of God.

The Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) is an organization of psychologists who are professing Christians. The following was admitted at one of their meetings:

We are often asked if we are "Christian psychologists" and find it difficult to answer since we don't know what the question implies. We are Christians who are psychologists but at the present time there is no acceptable Christian psychology that is markedly different from non-Christian psychology. It is difficult to imply that we function in a manner that is fundamentally distinct from our non-Christian colleagues . . . as yet there is not an acceptable theory, mode of research or treatment methodology that is distinctly Christian.¹

When we use the words *Christian psychology* and other similar phrases, let it be understood that there is no such practice or person in the sense that the practice or the person is performing a specifically Christian activity. Also, when we use the word *Christian* in reference to various mental health professionals, it does not necessarily mean that the person is a true believer.

Christian psychology depends on psychology itself. Because psychology is such a broad field, we want to make it clear that when we use the word *psychology*, we are referring to psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies.

Since Christian psychology depends on secular psychology, the bulk of this book will be directed at scientifically and biblically exposing the myths surrounding such psychology. If secular psychology falls under such scrutiny, then the domino effect should topple Christian psychology as well.

A Questionable, Detrimental Counterfeit?

Professional psychotherapy with its underlying psychologies is questionable at best, detrimental at worst, and a spiritual counterfeit at least. The purpose of this book is to demonstrate the truth of that statement and to raise the challenge of purging the church of all evidences of this scourge. On the one hand there is enough biblical and scientific evidence to shut down the secular Psychology Industry and with it the Christian Psychology Industry. On the other hand, we are not naive enough to believe that the overwhelming evidence supporting its demise will be heeded by the majority of Christians.

Many will not be interested in reading about the biblical and scientific evidence, because it will contradict their established assumptions about the psychological way. Most therapeutic practitioners, who rely on income produced by their therapeutically oriented clients, will not even read about the research condemning professional psychotherapy, which is presented in this book. And, Christian therapists will resist the potential demise of their therapeutically produced income and will pay little, if any, attention to the research results and criticisms of how contrary to Scripture are their wares. One professional psychotherapy organization reveals:

It is no secret that therapists are rarely swayed by research findings. . . . once in practice, most clinicians are far more influenced by the last workshop they went to or how their clients respond to a given intervention than by anything published in the scholarly journals.²

First, we will deal with the overall picture of the psychological way and its false promises. Then we will reveal the fallacies of various biblical justifications for using psychology. There are no valid scientific reasons for using professional psychotherapy by either believers or unbelievers, but the psychological way should be doubly condemned and rejected by Christians. First, the psychological way should be condemned and rejected because of the lack of research support for the use of professional psychological counseling and its underlying psychologies. Second, the psychological way of understanding and changing people is condemned by the very Word of God.

There is a psychological way and a biblical way to understand human nature and to transform the lives of people. The psychological way is the way of psychotherapy, which is simply the treatment of problems of living by psychological, man-made means. By applying techniques and methodologies based on psychological theories, a psychologically trained counselor attempts to assist an individual to change attitudes, feelings, perceptions, values, and behavior.

Psychotherapists are those who are trained and licensed to perform a wide variety of therapies. They include psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, clinical psychologists, marriage and family counselors, some social workers, and many who call themselves Christian psychologists, Christian counselors, and even biblical counselors. In addition, many individuals practice psychotherapy without a license and many of the self-help systems are psychotherapies in practice without being named as such.

Furthermore, the psychological way encompasses all the psychological ways of understanding the human condition, why people act the way they do, and how they change. These teachings have become so prevalent in secular schools, books, magazines and other media that they permeate the thinking of most people. Worse yet, these teachings have become so accepted in Christian schools, seminaries, churches, missionary organizations, books, radio and other media that many Christians assume such psychological ideas are true and even biblical. Thus, the tentacles of the psychological way have a global, gargantuan, gridiron grasp on the thinking of many Christians.

The pure biblical way, on the other hand, is based on God's Word rather than on human wisdom. Instead of using psychological theories, Christians are to minister God's grace through biblical means. They are to help one another identify with Christ in them and live according to His life, increasing in Christlike attitudes, thoughts, words and actions.

Although the biblical way has existed for thousands of years, the psychological way is relatively new. It has only been during the twentieth century that Christians began to trust psychology more than the Bible in dealing with problems of living. As a result, psychology has displaced much of Christianity. Even for those who are Christians, psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies have contaminated the pure ministry of the Word of God and the life of Christ in the believer. Today people wholeheartedly believe that psychological counseling theories, dressed in a wide variety of styles and shades, contain the secrets and answers for helping troubled souls. Their confidence in the curative power of psychotherapy has increased in spite of the absence of substantial proof of any great degree of effectiveness.³ Persuaded by the claims of psychotherapists, they fail to question the validity of its claims, refuse to examine research, and blindly believe popular myths about psychotherapy.

Those who must accept the most responsibility for the church's capitulation to psychotherapy are not the psychotherapists for offering their services, but rather the Bible colleges, seminaries, and churches where psychology is either promoted or permitted. Those teachers and pastors who are recommending and referring to this pseudo-scientific substitute for the true cure of souls should be denounced and renounced; but those leaders who have simply permitted the rise of this heresy without a word of warning to the sheep are also culpable.

Contrary to what most people think, psychotherapy is a belief system similar to that of a religion. Psychotherapeutic beliefs and religious beliefs both rely on faith. We will be examining some of the psychotherapeutic faith systems and consider the following questions: Does psychotherapy really work? Can psychotherapy harm? Is psychotherapy based on observable, verifiable fact or on subjective theories and interpretations? To what extent is psychotherapy medicine, philosophy, or religion? On what ideologies are the various psychotherapeutic systems founded? Are Christianity and psychotherapy truly compatible? In addition, the question of Christians ministering to one another will be examined and a challenge given to the church to restore the original practice of ministering to troubled souls.

Most Christians agree that the Bible is the basis for living the Christian life, but very few seem to believe that the Bible is sufficient to deal with **all** problems of living, which include those nonorganically caused categories of behavior that now carry psychiatric and psychological diagnostic labels. Many in the church believe that the Bible provides preventative principles for mental-emotional-behavioral well-being but hesitate to accept that the Bible contains restorative power. We maintain that God and His Word provide a completely sufficient foundation for living the Christian life, which would include mental-emotional-behavioral health. We further maintain that the Bible contains the healing balm for all nonorganically based problems of living that might be labeled as mental-emotional-behavioral disorders.

The Bible should also be used to minister to the souls of those who are suffering from biological diseases, even though they are under the care of a medical doctor. To substantiate this position, we expose the weaknesses of psychotherapy in contrast to biblical means of living a life pleasing to God and facing the challenges of life in the midst of trials and affliction.

Our concern in this book has to do with the doctrines and methods of psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies, and not the numerous other fields of psychology. We believe that all problems of living, including nonorganically related mental-emotional-behavioral disorders have a spiritual, Christ-centered solution rather than a psychological, self-centered solution. However, because psychotherapy has been embraced and promoted by seminary and Bible college professors, pastors, and other Christian leaders, this position may evoke an extreme reaction from many, including those who, through training or current professional involvement, have vested interests and commitments in the Psychology Industry.

Nevertheless, we pray that this book will encourage believers that they do not have to turn to the wisdom of men in their search for "the way, the truth, and the life." Indeed, this is Jesus' place in the believer. He is, indeed, "the way, the truth, and the life," and He Himself is in the believer. Thus every true Christian has been given "all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him" (2 Peter 1:3).

The Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the very life of Christ in the believer are more than sufficient for dealing with the most difficult problems of living, including those that have been given psychiatric and psychological labels, as well as meeting the ordinary challenges of life. We also pray that this book will encourage believers to take confidence in God's way of meeting life's challenges and of ministering to one another in the Body of Christ according to the life of Christ in each believer.

The Popularity of the Psychological Way

Modern psychotherapy is less than one hundred years old, but during this period of time it has influenced and changed modern man's way of thinking about himself and about the very meaning of life. Many have been trained through these years to have great confidence in psychology for healing mental, emotional, behavioral and other such personal and relational problems. Besides having unquestioned confidence in it, many have come to believe that if anyone doubts, questions, or contradicts psychology, there must be something wrong with that person. Many have been led to believe that only nonthinking, naive individuals have such reservations and that any intelligent, informed person must accept psychotherapy as the healing "balm of Gilead."

In the early years of psychotherapy, medical doctors, ministers, and many others questioned and even ridiculed its theories and practice. But now, after years of effective propaganda, this craze has so influenced every walk of life that to doubt or disagree is to be narrow-minded, nonintelligent, or maybe even neurotic. After all, who would criticize or contradict something so seemingly caring and helpful as psychology?

Since the beginning of psychotherapy at the turn of the century, psychological definitions, diagnoses, and labels of mental-emotional-behavioral disorders have progressively expanded to include a vast array of both mild and severe problems of living. The number of people considered needing help has dramatically increased.

In her book *Manufacturing Victims*, Dr. Tana Dineen says, "Over ten million Americans seek the services of the Psychology Industry each year."⁴

In documenting the growth of psychotherapy, Dineen says:

In the early 1960's, 14% of the U.S. population (25 million of a total 180 million) had ever received psychological services. By 1976, that number had risen to 26%. However by 1990, at least 33% (65 million of 250 million) have been psychological users at some point in their lives and in 1995, the American Psychological Association stated that 46% of the U.S. population (128 million) had seen a mental health professional. Some even predict that by the year 2000 users will be the majority—constituting 80% of the population.⁵

Along with this exploding population of psychotherapy users, there is an exploding population of providers. According to Dr. Robyn Dawes, the number of licensed professional psychologists is doubling every ten years.⁶ One prediction indicated a 64% increase in the number of psychologists in the next ten years.⁷ These psychologists represent only one of a number of licensed professional groups providing psychotherapy.

This expansion includes those operating under the "Christian" label. The American Association of Christian Counselors has over 17,500 members. The Christian psychological counseling market includes many individuals, small counseling centers, and also large conglomerates with radio programs that entice Christians into therapy programs. In 1996, the Minirth Meier New Life Clinic was reported as having 25 inpatient units, 55 outpatient units, and over 600 employees. That clinic alone reported 500 inpatient admissions and 7,600 outpatient clinic visits just during the month of June 1996. Rapha, another mental health provider, has 63 programs, "has a network of 3,500 churches in its RaphaCare program," and "has doubled in size in the last 18 months."⁸

In terms of costs throughout the field, Dawes estimates that in 1990 the costs of office-based, licensed clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and other licensed professionals exceeded 12 billion dollars.⁹ Putting these figures together with an earlier total cost of mental health services (17 billion dollars in the late seventies¹⁰), it would not be unreasonable to estimate that the total cost of mental health in America exceeds 24 billion dollars. Researcher Dr. Jerome Frank has commented about the burgeoning business of psychotherapy as follows:

The demand for psychotherapy keeps pace with the supply, and at times one has the uneasy feeling that the supply may be creating the demand. . . . Psychotherapy is the only form of treatment which, at least to some extent, appears to create the illness it treats.¹¹

Psychotherapy in its various forms is frantically being sought by the worried well, who are looking for a psychological solution for an internal anxiety that often has no real external justification. Myriads of people are going to therapists for an ever-expanding variety of discomforts that merely represent one form of anxiety or another. Some even seek psychological counseling because they suspect that there must be more to life than what they are presently experiencing. Frank concludes:

Too many people today have too much money and not enough to do, and they turn to psychotherapy to combat the resulting boredom. . . . Today hosts of persons seek psychotherapy for discomforts that a less affluent society would regard as trivial.¹²

Psychological providers, in turn, are eager to deal with these discomforts. According to the Ralph Nader research group, "A distressingly large number of mental health professionals take the position that everyone who walks into their offices needs therapy, frequently long-term therapy, which often stretches for several years to the tune of thousands of dollars."¹³

Frank notes: "Our psychotherapeutic literature has contained precious little on the redemptive power of suffering, acceptance of one's lot in life, filial piety, adherence to tradition, self-restraint and moderation."¹⁴

Leo Rosten says:

As recently as 30 years ago, no one questioned your right to be unhappy. Happiness was considered a blessing, not a guarantee. You were permitted to suffer pain, or fall into moods, or seek solitude without being analyzed, interpreted and discussed.¹⁵

George Albee, a past president of the American Psychological Association says:

The old conventional sources of explaining the mysteries of human existence, such as religion and science, no longer hold much water for a lot of people. So people have turned largely to psychology as one field which attempts to answer questions about the meaning of life.¹⁶

Alan Stone observes:

The psychologizing of the American public has created an expanding market. . . . As a result of the psychologizing of the American public, people who have marital problems, sex problems, problems with their children, who are having psychological "discomfort" increasingly look for psychological help. It is an infinitely expanding market.¹⁷

Many people look to psychotherapy to make them happy, to escape the pain of living, and to find fulfillment and satisfaction. As long as they look to psychotherapy with hope and expectancy, the popularity of psychology will continue to soar.

The Psychotherapeutic Marketplace

In the psychotherapeutic marketplace it has been estimated that there are over 400 different therapeutic approaches and more than 10,000 specific techniques available to the consumer.¹⁸ Dr. Morris Parloff reports:

New schools emerge constantly, heralded by claims that they provide better treatment, amelioration, or management of the problems and neuroses of the day. No school has ever withdrawn from the field for failure to live up to its claims, and as a consequence all continue to co-exist.¹⁹

All continue to exist and all claim success in spite of the fact that the various techniques, as well as the theories on which they rest, often contradict each other. For instance, one therapeutic technique may encourage freedom from responsibility while another may place a high value on personal responsibility. Through popular articles, advertising, and word of mouth, the consumer is led to the conclusion that any kind of therapy may work, no matter how silly or satanic it may be. However, people generally improve without any therapy at all.

The number of therapies has proliferated greatly, so much so that it would be difficult to imagine a form of psychotherapy that has not already been conceived and practiced. Such forms of psychotherapy range all the way from very simple ones, which may include lying to the client by telling him that he is getting better (even when the therapist knows he is not getting better), to physically active ones, which require the client to perform specified acts whether he wants to or not.

We have jokingly suggested that we could contrive a theory and give it either a simple title, such as "Theory X," or some esoteric title that no one understands, such as "Osmotic Therapy." To make it saleable, we could select several available concepts from any psychology text. Then to make it particularly appealing, we could add some trinitarian structure similar to Freud's id, ego, and superego; or Harris's Parent, Adult, and Child; or Sullivan's good-me, bad-me, and not-me; or Glasser's reality, responsibility, and right-and-wrong.

Next we would need to write a simple book about it that could be easily understood by the general public, set up an institute (preferably in Los Angeles or New York) and hire a staff. Then, after the initial "success," we would contact the media and tell the world about our unrivaled triumphs, ignore or conceal our failures, and promise unsurpassed miracles of happiness, adjustment, solutions to personal problems, and even physical healing. We would attempt to have several psychology magazines write articles about our new therapy. Then we would provide seminars to train therapists in our new psychotherapy. Finally, we would have to make room for the lonely, bored, frustrated, and anxiety-ridden masses who have tried the other brands of psychotherapy to no avail.

We are not accusing all psychotherapists of being dishonest or merely fabricating therapies out of whole cloth. However, when people feel desperate, they are vulnerable to the psychological promises of relief, and, because they are uninformed about the kind of treatment they will receive, they enroll hoping for relief.

Manufacturing Victims

Dineen, a licensed psychologist, has abandoned her clinical practice and written a book titled *Manufacturing Victims: What the Psychology Industry is Doing to People*. Dineen's book is the result of her extensive knowledge of the research in psychotherapy as well as her own practical experience in the field. Dineen uses the expression "Psychology Industry" to include a number of individuals. She names "traditional mental health professions of psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis and clinical social work" as well as "psychotherapy." She says:

No longer can clear distinctions be made between them; so, what I call the Psychology Industry comprises all five of these and it encompasses, as well, the ever expanding array of psychotherapists: the counsellors and advisors of all persuasions, whether licensed, credentialed, proclaimed, or self-proclaimed.²⁰

Dineen's main thesis for which she provides extensive support is this:

With degrees in psychology, medicine, social work, nursing or with no academic qualifications at all, the expanding work force of the Psychology Industry relies for its survival and growth on its ability to manufacture victims.²¹

Dineen relates in detail how the psychological manufacturing of victims takes place. She differentiates between real victims and the ones manufactured by the Psychology Industry, which involves a blurring between the two and spreads a net to include virtually everyone. She concludes her book by saying:

The Psychology Industry can neither reform itself from within nor should it be allowed to try. It should be stopped from doing what it is doing to people, from manufacturing victims. And while the Psychology Industry is being dismantled, people can boycott psychological treatment, protest the influence of the Psychology Industry and resist being manufactured into victims.²²

Manufacturing Victims is a blunt but honest appraisal of what the Psychology Industry is doing to people and will continue to do unless a miracle puts a stop to it. While Christians may describe this book as a “secular book,” for a “secular audience,” it is even more important for those in the church to read it. The author has accurately described “The Psychology Industry with its false explanations of cause, false statements of fact, false reports of cure and false claims of authority.”²³ Christians need to know the information in Dineen’s book, because the church has been overrun with the theories and therapies of the Psychology Industry, which has tentacles into almost every facet of the church through some of the most popular Christian writers.

The Death Knell of Psychotherapy?

Because of all the research on the effectiveness of psychotherapy and for numerous other reasons related to the practice of psychotherapy, such as the use of mental health professionals as experts in court and other realms of life, people are becoming concerned. One person who is both knowledgeable and concerned is R. Christopher Barden, Ph.D., J.D., who has proposed a bill for federal and state legislation. Barden’s proposed bill, titled “The Truth and Responsibility in Mental Health Practices Act,” reads:

To reform the mental health system; to restrict federal and state health care reimbursements to those mental health treatments proven reasonably safe and effective by reliable scientific methods; to require states receiving federal health care funding to limit state health care reimbursements to those mental health treatments proven reasonably safe and effective by reliable scientific methods; to require mental health practitioners to truthfully inform patients, clients and insurance systems of known and reasonably foreseeable benefits, risks, hazards and alternative mental health treatments as demonstrated by reliable scientific research methods; to protect the integrity of the legal system and the rights of citizens from unscientific and reckless expert testimony in courts of law; and other reforms.²⁴

A version of the bill called the “Barden Letter” has been signed by a number of distinguished professionals in the mental health field. We believe that fair minded and thinking individuals will support this bill; but we know that politics often prevail rather than common sense and justice for all.

It may be years before such a bill is passed by the National Congress. However, in the meantime, Indiana became the first state to adopt a consumer protection law for mental health practices. A press release from Barden’s office states:

Importantly, the new law requires that “a mental health provider shall inform each patient . . . of the reasonably foreseeable risks and relative benefits of proposed treatments and alternative treatments.” National experts in law and psychology called this a landmark in the history of the mental health system.

“The mental health system will never be the same again,” said R. Christopher Barden, a psychologist, lawyer and President of the National Association for Consumer Protection in Mental Health Practices. **“It is indeed shocking that many, if not most forms of psychotherapy currently offered to consumers are not supported by credible scientific evidence.”**²⁵ (Bold added.)

This act, if adopted throughout America, may bring the mental health industry to its knees. Barden says, “Too many Americans do not realize that much of the mental health industry is little more than a national consumer fraud.”²⁶ Christians should not be so naive as to believe that Christian psychologists are not involved in such fraudulent practices.

Regardless of the passage, implementation, and policing of the Barden bill, we believe there is no psychotherapy to which Christians should submit themselves. We present both research and biblical reasons in this book, as well as in our other books.²⁷

False Assumptions about Psychotherapy

A first step away from being intimidated or infatuated with psychology would be to look seriously at some of psychology’s false assumptions. People who believe these popular assumptions about psychology often do not know where these notions originated or that these ideas are merely human opinions. Then, when these ideas are combined with Scripture, people wrongly assume they are biblical. The following are some **false assumptions that have no biblical or scientific basis**.

1. The id, ego, and superego are actual parts of the human psyche.
2. A person’s unconscious mind drives behavior more than his conscious mind chooses behavior.
3. Dreams are keys to understanding the unconscious and thus the person.
4. Present behavior is determined by unresolved conflicts from childhood.
5. Many people are in denial because they have repressed unpleasant memories into the unconscious.
6. Parents are to blame for most people’s problems.
7. People need insight into their past to make significant changes in thoughts, attitudes and actions.
8. Children must successfully pass through their “psychosexual stages” of development or they will suffer from neurosis later on.
9. If I am to experience significant change, I must remember and re-experience painful incidents in my past.
10. The first five years of life determine what a person will be like when he grows up.
11. Everything that has ever happened to me is located in my unconscious mind.
12. People use unconscious defense mechanisms to cope with life.
13. People need to attribute worth to themselves.
14. People need positive self-regard.
15. Most problems are because of low self-esteem.
16. People need high self-esteem. They need to feel good about themselves.
17. God’s main purpose is to meet peoples’ felt needs.
18. Christians can learn much about themselves through studying psychological theorists, such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Carl Rogers, and Albert Ellis.

19. Christians need to be trained in psychology to really help people.
20. People need training in biblical counseling, because just knowing the Bible is not enough for helping people with serious problems.
21. The best counselor uses both psychology and the Bible.
22. Alcoholics Anonymous was started by Christians and is based on Christian principles.
23. Alcoholics Anonymous and other recovery groups are necessary for Christians to overcome addictions.
24. Learning about temperament types and tests can help Christians understand one another.
25. Professional psychologists and therapists are better than amateurs in dealing with mental-emotional-behavioral problems.
26. People must pay money to obtain the best help for mental-emotional-behavioral problems.
27. Paying for professional counseling effectively motivates people to improve.
28. A psychotherapist's training, credentials, and experience are all important ingredients for effectively helping others with problems of living.²⁸

These false assumptions pervade the church and even permeate missionary efforts throughout the world. How many Christians can read through such a list of false assumptions without thinking we are “throwing the baby out with the bath water”? We declare that we are **not** throwing the baby out with the bath water. Those who are drowning the church in psychology, need to get rid of the contaminated water. If the baby represents the babe in Christ or the whole Body of Christ and the bath water is what contains the contamination of the world, the babe in Christ or the Body of Christ can only be clean if the bath water is thrown out. Throughout this book and in our other writings we provide documentation demonstrating that the false assumptions listed above have no biblical or scientific support.

Notes: References are available in the hard copy of the book.

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