

COUNSELING THE DEPRESSED PERSON: THE PURITAN ALTERNATIVE TO
SECULAR PSYCHOLOGY

by

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ABSTRACT

Counseling Chronically Depressed People: The Puritan Alternative to Secular Psychology
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While there is an abundance of existing literature written on the subject of counseling depressed people from both secular psychological and religious perspectives, the views and methods of the Puritans on the subject are largely unknown, untapped and unapplied among contemporary Christians. Even though depressed moods and traits have been in existence since the fall of mankind, many secular psychologists and Christian counselors still do not rightly understand its origins, causes and cures and are too quick to medicate the problem or resort to self-help methods. But the ancient Biblical principles documented and applied by the Puritans for the diagnosis and cure of depression have proven to be what sufferers really need and desire. Therefore, the general intent is to put the topic of counseling of the depressed to the test by examining the historical writings and counsel of Puritan writers against that of their current counterparts, namely the secular psychological methods, and how these modern methods fall short in dealing with a syndrome of depression. In particular, the Puritan foundational theories of diagnosing a pattern of depression and the theological themes they used for cures of such situations are examined and thoroughly documented. Finally, these methods of the Puritans are considered for the current culture and how the diagnosis, causes, cures and prognosis can all be rightly and widely applied to those who are chronically depressed in the contemporary church.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“I am sorry to have to tell you this, but the results of the tests indicate that you have signs of mild to moderate depression. And I am going to recommend that a pastoral leadership position is not the best career choice for you upon graduation.”

What? How could that be? He had just spent the last couple of years in seminary preparing for pastoral ministry. He had put his family life and promising career on hold to pursue a dream of serving God and helping others as a full-time vocation. Throughout the years of faithful church attendance, numerous laypeople along with well-respected leaders in his church often told him that he has strong ministry gifts in the areas of teaching and leadership, and that he should attend seminary in order to fine-tune those spiritual gifts.

Were they wrong? Was the school approved Christian psychologist that delivered the stinging news about his depression somehow mistaken? After all, how could a small battery of tests like personality profiles, psychological analysis, physical assessments and one-on-one interviews truly reveal something as subjective as depression? He did not know that the results and recommendations of these required, school-sanctioned tests were conditional to graduating and obtaining a seminary degree.

Prior to the results of these tests, he never considered himself as a depressed individual. Sure, he was easy-going, quiet, reserved, stoic, guarded, somewhat introverted and rarely wore his emotions on his sleeve. But at the same time he was stable, empathetic, logical, practical, fair, passionate and theologically inquisitive. He could not get enough of

the Bible whether it was through reading or listening to sermons and lectures. People complimented him on his ability to digest and remember doctrines, history, dates, names and accomplishments of other past and present heroes of the faith. He was commended in his church community for being able to explain and teach complex theological concepts by breaking them down, looking at the parts and then putting them all back together again to demonstrate how the parts fit with the whole of the Bible. Confirmation in his teaching skills came often from others due to his ability to speak to the multiple levels of people in order to meet them where they were at in their spiritual walks. Teaching did not even feel like work to him. He felt God's pleasure when he taught others through the ministry of preaching and teaching. Things were going so well in these areas that it became quite obvious that seminary was the next logical step to an eventual career in professional pastoral ministry.

But all of those past accomplishments and commendations meant nothing now that he was diagnosed with the label of "depression." His ministry goals and dreams were crushed at the moment the Christian psychologist delivered the bad news. The professionals made their recommendation and the institution concurred: They would not be sending him to any church or ministry internship due to his current state of being. The seminary offered no further help and gave no hope of future recovery. He chose not to argue with the professional results. He immediately dropped out of the MDiv program just a few credits shy of his supposed, divinely-ordained calling believing that God and the church could not use such a damaged person. His spirit needed healing, and his soul needed immediate care. He was without hope. Then the Puritans spoke...

* * *

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” Ps 103:1-2

The soul of man bears the image of God; so nothing can satisfy it but He whose image it bears. Our soul, says Augustine, was created as by God, so for God, and is therefore never quiet till it rests in God.¹

True psychology (“the study of the soul”) can be done only by Christians, since only Christians have the resources for the understanding and the transformation of the soul. Since the secular discipline of psychology is based on godless assumptions and evolutionary foundations, it is capable of dealing with people only superficially and only on the temporal level. The Puritans, long before the arrival of godless psychology, identified their ministry with people as “soul work.”²

Psychology derives its name from “the study of the soul.”³ From a biblical view, the emotional, inner, nonmaterial, part of all mankind that survives after bodily death, the human soul (*nephesh* in Hebrew; *psuché* in Greek) has been in existence since God first breathed life into man. Even though this noncorporeal soul cannot be seen or physically quantified, the Puritans believed in the preciousness, greatness and direct correlation of the soul as it related to mankind is that it is “the best, and most noble part of man, as distinct from the body... [but] the body is but a poor, empty vessel, without this great thing called the soul”⁴ and “if the soul be lost, the man is lost.”⁵ Due to this inseparable man/soul connection, Puritan reasoning concluded that man can be temporally damaged and eternally

¹ Thomas Gataker, quoted in *A Puritan Golden Treasury*, ed. Thomas, I.D.E (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 286.

² John F. MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997), 58.

³ Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 335.

⁴ Bunyan, John, *The Greatness of the Soul* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 2006), 108.

⁵ John Flavel, *Pneumatologia: A Treatise of the Soul of Man* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of

lost as a direct result of his soul being sinfully affected and manifesting into a melancholic depression.

Because of its wide-spread frequency amongst many people groups throughout history, depression is known as the “common cold of mental illnesses,”⁶ and has universally plagued the human souls of many in a fallen, sinful world. Though it takes many forms, manifests itself differently and is called by various names, it is a little known fact that depressed moods plagues multitudes of Christians. While that might sound like a shocking statement since the stereotypical Christ follower is often incorrectly portrayed as a happy-go-lucky, smiling person without a care in the world, some immediate questions come to mind: Can true Christians become depressed? Might it be possible that overt, rebellious sin leads to depression? Could all of these hurt and deeply discouraged believers be helped and encouraged by relying upon the Scriptures alone for answers in dealing with those who are depressed? Are seventeenth-century Puritanical techniques old and outdated for dealing with the depressed? Or have modern-day, secular psychological discoveries proven to be a better, more effective means to deal with the contemporary epidemic of depression? And most importantly, what does our ultimate standard, the Bible, direct us to think about this matter of depression?

These questions will be addressed throughout this paper as it leads to this conclusion: As the “true physicians of the soul,”⁷ the Puritans and their gospel-driven, time-tested, Christ-centered, Scriptural counseling methods and hope-filled practices produce the

Truth Trust, 1968), Volume 2: 477.

⁶ David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill, eds., *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 335.

⁷ Timothy J. Keller, "Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral*

best, longest-lasting, God-glorifying results regarding depression in the life of a Christian.

An introductory note: Due to page limitations, this thesis project will be purposeful in the attempt to provide a limited and *unequal* amount of space to secular psychology counseling practices among the general, non-Christian public compared with that of the Puritan methods. While it will endeavor to be fair and objective in the attempt to accurately portray generalities of secular psychological theories, beliefs and techniques in a concise manner, more space will be devoted to the chosen overall topic and primarily focus upon Puritan counseling practices pertaining to depression among Christian believers.

Another final clarifying note worthy of explanation is that this paper will not focus on depression that stems from the influence of brain physiology. However, some general comments will be made about the secular usage of medication and anti-depressants, but the primary focus of this paper will be on the spiritual and emotional aspects of depression and the counseling of people in such conditions. Modern psychology agrees with historical Puritan thought in that some depression can be caused by diet, medical and physical ailments. Pastor Richard Baxter penned this sentiment on how physical issues or brain trauma may factor into the cause of one's depression:

With very many there is a great part of the cause in distemper, weakness, and diseasedness of the body; and by it the soul is greatly disabled to any comfortable sense. But the more it ariseth from such natural necessity, the less sinful and less dangerous to the soul; but never the less troublesome, but the more.⁸

It is not the intent to diminish or suggest that physical causes of depression reduce its importance, pain or magnitude, but since only a minority of depression is due to physical

Practice 9, no. 3 (1988), 13.

⁸ Baxter, Richard, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: Volume XVII*, ed. William Orme, *The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith and Physic* (London:

root causes as discovered in physical exams of the depressed that reveal that less than twenty percent of people experience depression due to physical ailments,⁹ this assignment will not directly address areas pertaining to the types of depression that are physically or biologically induced.

Secular Psychology and Puritan Terminology Pertaining to Depression

In the historical construct, circa 1550 to 1700, Puritan pastors often found themselves experiencing a common, paralyzing scourge within their churches. It not only negatively and painfully affected their parishioners, but also personally plagued the pastoral leadership itself. From village to village, these country parsonages often had their own local and individualized labels for the dreaded, soul-numbing malady such as: black bile, dejection, spiritual desertion, downcast, desolations, anfechtungen, accidie, dark night of the soul,¹⁰ and the most often-used, all-inclusive term to describe this horrific, debilitating situation of their day: melancholy.

Puritan Pastor Timothy Rogers (1658-1728) himself experienced a debilitating depression which took him out of the pastoral ministry for eight years. After recovering from his dark season of suffering, he penned a personal letter in 1691 that described his bout with melancholy:

Melancholy seizes on the brain and spirits, and incapacitates them for thought or action; it confounds and disturbs all their thoughts, and unavoidably fills them with anguish and vexation, of which there is no resemblance in any other distemper... when this ugly humor is deeply fixed and has spread its malignant influence over every part, it is as

Paternoster, 1830), 243.

⁹ Wayne Mack, *Out of the Blues: Dealing with the Blues of Depression & Loneliness* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2006), 3.

¹⁰ Rhett Smith, "Depression, Burnout & Ministry: Discernment in Pastoral Caregiving", February 6, 2009.

vain a thing to strive against it... One would be glad to be rid of such oppressing things, but all our striving will not make them go away... he has no prospect nor hope...the faculties of the soul are weakened and all its operations disturbed and clouded, and the poor body languishes and pines away at the same time... it commonly lasts very long... and all this long season of its continuance is full of fear and torment, of horror and amazement. It is in every respect sad and overwhelming; it is a state of darkness that has no discernable beams of light. It is a land of darkness on which no sun at all seems to shine.¹¹

Modern-day, secular psychology and even some Biblical counselors also have similar experiences and emotional-sounding language from which they draw to describe the depressed condition: despondency, doom, grief, discouragement, despair, and the blues.¹² For a concise definition of depression, *The Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference* defines it this way: "Depression is a debilitating mood, feeling, or attitude of hopelessness (despair or joylessness), which becomes a person's reason for not handling the most important issues of life."¹³

While some of today's psychological professionals might understand and recognize the above mentioned, antiquated, Puritan terms as equivalent labels for our contemporary version of depression, many casual readers and laity will probably not. So for the purposes of this paper, the term *depression* will be used as a consistent, broad, catch-all term simply meaning a "failure to function,"¹⁴ throughout that encompasses the archaic language of the Puritans while holding on to their original intent.

¹¹ Timothy Rogers, *Trouble of Mind and the Disease of Melancholy* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2004), xxiv-xxv.

¹² Mack, 4.

¹³ Robert Smith, *The Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference* (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 2000), 206.

¹⁴ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's New Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1977), 485.

Historical Background

Even though the Puritans and founding psychologists existed only two or three centuries apart in their places in history, they could not be further at odds in with each other in their core beliefs and practices. Historical characters, timelines, contexts and past beliefs about depression throughout the ages are important for providing a backdrop to a fuller comprehension of the issues to be discussed. In the same way that depression needs to be properly diagnosed, identified and probed for potential causation and eventual cure, accurate historical happenings are also worthy of exploration in that:

To diagnose and understand depression involves a complex exercise of delving into the human psyche. It requires identifying the nature and cause of an individual's injury or dysfunction by evaluating a person's complaints, identifying the history of these complaints and examining the person's background and current mental state. In some cases laboratory and medical data can aid in the process of evaluation. As spiritual and believing people who seek to understand this mysterious malady, it helps to understand its history and how it has been understood throughout the ages.¹⁵

This section will briefly examine some of those historical aspects, in an attempt to incorporate psychological and church involvement and influence on the topic of depression while comparing and contrasting their origins in order to provide a foundational context for the remainder of the paper.

Secular Psychology History – Who Were the Psychologists?

When dealing with the topic of a psychological nature such as depression, it only makes sense to include foundational matters. The following sections will provide a brief, condensed background of the roots, founders and history of secular psychology with the aim to provide an overall context toward the understanding of secular beliefs about depression

¹⁵ Pablo Polischuk, "Depression Through the Ages: "Sin" or "Sickness?" Diagnosis and Treatment," *Contact: The Ministry Magazine of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary* 37, no. 1

and its treatment in a secular society.

Timeline

Tracing its roots from the disciplines of philosophy, physiology and psychophysics a mere 130 years ago, Wilhelm Wundt founded the first psychology laboratory in 1879 Germany. Shortly after, in 1907 Hermann Ebbinghaus penned the epigram, “Psychology has a long past but only a short history.”¹⁶ In other words, while some aspects of psychology can be loosely traced back thousands of years, the modern-day version of it as a scientific, systematized, professional discipline is still in its infancy.

Major Secular Psychologists

Like any other historical movement or discipline, secular psychology has its own group of major founders and pioneers in the field. William James, Alfred Adler, Erich Fromm, and Abraham Maslow are just several significant and well-known names in the field of psychology. However, for the purposes of this paper, and because contemporary arguments are most likely and heatedly contested among the Freudians, Rogerians and the Skinnerians as to the best method for helping people solve their problems in living¹⁷, only four, and equally noteworthy psychologists (Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers and B. F. Skinner) have been selected as the four main secular psychology founders and focal points. A brief biography of highlights from each of these men is provided below to

(Fall 2008), 15.

¹⁶ David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill, eds., *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 952.

¹⁷ Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Preacher's Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1981), 159.

demonstrate their contributions, presuppositions, methodologies and overall effects on the psychological community and society at large as it relates to their foundational beliefs.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) rejected most Biblical characters¹⁸ and events as mythological at best and began with an anti-God premise that believed religion to be “the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity”¹⁹ and that all religious doctrines were “illusions [because] they do not admit of proof, and no one can be compelled to consider them as true or to believe in them.”²⁰ From this bedrock belief stemmed the idea that a person’s main problem was rooted in poor socialization and that the best solution was to be resocialized by a counseling expert. As a helpless victim of others who were abusive, stern or rule-bound, the individual has a built up “a conscience (or Superego) that was overly strict [and] this conscience now is in conflict with his normal desires (Id), and it is this conflict that is the source of his current difficulties.”²¹ Due to this negative past socialization/upbringing, every time the counselee violates a “do” or “don’t” in everyday life circumstances, they will feel guilty.

Therefore, Freud is not only recognized for influencing the self movement (self-esteem, self-regard, etc.),²² he is also credited for reasoning that it is the counseling professional’s task to undo what past societal circumstances and others have done, using the process of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy to delve into the counselee’s past. Through

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (United Kingdom: Vintage, 1939).

¹⁹ Martin Bobgan and Deidre Bobgan, *Prophets of Psychoheresy II* (Santa Barbara, CA: Eastgate Publishers, 1990), 53.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: CreateSpace, 1928), 54.

²¹ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), 73-75.

²² Bobgan and Bobgan, *Prophets of Psychoheresy II*, 54.

this esoteric process, the counselor eventually replaces these authoritarian people from the past, assumes their authoritative role, and shows and demonstrates grace, understanding and permissiveness resulting in the resocialization of the counselee.²³

Carl Jung (1875-1961) was raised up in a family of clergyman uncles and his father was a Lutheran pastor. He “centered his theory in an esoteric religious tradition”²⁴ that had a deep respect for the Bible (mainly its stories, figures and symbols) as it dealt with the meaning of life and he strongly advocated primary knowledge of God. Jung’s psychological understanding of the Scripture claimed that all religious propositions are rooted in the soul (or psyche)²⁵ and it is at the intersection of the soul/psyche that divinity (Christ) and humanity connected. His founding of analytical psychology theorized that behind all psychosis and its strange manifestations (dreams and the unconscious) is a story and that therapy could begin only after the thorough investigation of that entire story. And at the center of each individual’s story was some sort of secret that screamed to be revealed. He experimented with word association and how these ideas were summarized and collected together and how these thoughts ultimately determined behavior. Jung also believed that “the psyche is self-healing and that the true doctor is the patient.”²⁶

Carl Rogers (1902-1987) taught that man’s central problem was in his failure to live up to potential and therefore suggested that all the resources resided in the self to resolve

²³ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 73-75.

²⁴ William Kirk Kilpatrick, *Psychological Seduction: The Failure of Modern Psychology* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 10.

²⁵ Jung, Carl, G, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. R.F.C Hull, *Answer to Job* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002).

²⁶ Benner and Hill, 657-660.

the issue.²⁷ Rogers is one of the rare founding fathers of psychology to believe that professional/expert counselors are not necessary in the psychological process. He touted a therapeutic, “person-centered”²⁸ counseling model that is simple, easy to use and apply due the underlying theory that people possess enough knowledge, personal insight and resources to handle their own problems. Its client-centered²⁹ nature is one of the main reasons why Rogerian methodology is popular among ministers and social workers today. Furthermore, Rogers believed that human beings with significant problems are just not living up to their potential and because man is basically good³⁰ (and not evil), that they just have to learn to self-actualize and release the power from within themselves to overcome³¹ and in doing so, the true “self and personality would emerge from the experience.”³²

B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) posited that the main problem for individuals was due to their environmental conditioning.³³ His solution was to recondition the counselee through behavior modification.³⁴ “The goal of Skinner’s work was simple: the control, prediction and interpretation of behavior [showing that] most animal and human behavior is controlled by its consequences rather its antecedents.”³⁵ This model claims to be empirical and

²⁷ Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 73.

²⁸ Eric L. Johnson, ed., *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 30.

²⁹ Carl R. Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory* (London: Constable, 2003).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 84-86.

³² Carl R. Rogers, "The Concept of the Fully Functioning Person," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice* 1, no. 1 (1963), 20.

³³ B. F. Skinner, "Can Psychology Be a Science of Mind?" 45, no. 11 (1990), 1206.

³⁴ Ibid., 73.

³⁵ Benner and Hill, 1129-1130.

scientific as a means to produce a problem-free society. Man has virtually no free will and is therefore a deterministic³⁶ product of his animalistic, herd-like environment and everything he does (behaviors) is determined by his surroundings. Consequentially, this meant that there is no real personal responsibility. As a result, Skinner's solution is to rearrange and reprogram the responses of the counselee via rewards (pleasure) and aversive/punishing (pain) controls.³⁷

As one can plainly see from the presuppositions above, most past and modern-day secular psychologists do not believe in the God of the Bible nor in the notion that the human soul even exists.³⁸ For psychologists to be the self-proclaimed experts on the soul study, (which they deem as non-existent), and are leaders in a helping profession based upon curing the soul seems to be disingenuous at best and unethical at worst.

Some might argue that there are small hints of truth woven within the models of the abovementioned secular psychology founding fathers and their theoretical frameworks, but it could also be equally contested that these theories contain some outrageous and outright lies that directly oppose the historical and theological truths contained within the pages of the Bible. As it will be discussed later in the paper and in further detail how these views relate to counseling the depressed, it should be mentioned here that the Puritan counselors, as the 'true physicians of the soul,' would not have dealt kindly with these fathers of secular psychology and their models. The Puritans would not only have labeled these models as heretical lies which oppose the God of the Scriptures, but they also would have

³⁶ B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002).

³⁷ Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 80-83.

³⁸ Benner and Hill, 1147.

been appalled at the outright denial and poor treatment of the human soul itself. The suppression of Biblical truth in exchange for fallen, human wisdom would be seen by them as a direct attack on the image of the Creator God Himself.

Beliefs about Depression

Based upon the above stated foundational theories and views from Freud, Jung, Rogers and Skinner, they had great disagreements and divergences in their psychological premises. This section will briefly illustrate these discrepancies while exposing their wide-ranging presuppositions and how, if extrapolated, causes it to base their man-made, pseudoscience, psychological analysis on flawed premises which cannot help but eventually lead to faulty conclusions as it relates to depression.

Freud's psychoanalysis is totally void of any belief in God and views faith as pathological. He said that man is not responsible for what he does and that mourning, melancholia and depression are not sinful ethically because they stem from negative self-regard/self-esteem. This is due to an "over-severe superego and from the displacement of negative feelings for another person onto the self [so he] sought to help patients improve their self-regard through insight into the unconscious [and that] guilt is caused by moral restrictions of the superego (not by sinning against the standards of a holy God)."³⁹ Finally, in Freud's own words relating to depression, he admitted that his theories and framework were not completely able to describe or relieve it due to its mysterious complexity: "Even in descriptive psychiatry the definition of melancholia is uncertain; it takes on various clinical forms (some of them suggesting somatic rather than psychogenic affections) that do not seem

³⁹ Bobgan and Bobgan, *Prophets of Psychoheresy II*, 54-55.

definitely to warrant reduction to a unit.”⁴⁰

Because of his religious background and upbringing, Carl Jung seems to be the closest to an historical, orthodox, and Biblical view (often using religious terms and imagery) of depression compared to the other three featured secular psychologists. This is evidenced in a personal letter as he responded to a depressed individual. Jung began by empathizing with the depressed condition as a force pressing people downwards and advised them to find others to invest in while finding some form of meaningful work. In his own words, and applying his own theory, he counsels the individual to be their own self-healing doctor:

I would raise animals and plants and find joy in their thriving. I would surround myself with beauty-no matter how primitive and artless-objects, colours, sounds. I would eat and drink well... When the darkness grows denser, I would penetrate to its very core and ground, and would not rest until amid the pain a light appeared to me, for in *excessu affectus* [in an excess of affect or passion] Nature reverses herself... I would renounce everything and engage in the lowest activities should my depression drive me to violence. I would wrestle with the dark angel until he dislocated my hip. For he is also the light and the blue sky which he withholds from me.⁴¹

Rogers’ reflective therapy methodologies are quite popular and implemented by many secular counseling professionals as well as Christian ministers due to the simplicity, teachability and minimal risk factors involved (because no advice is ever given to the counselee).⁴² Rogerian thought would say that depression is a failure to realize one’s true potential. And the way to deal with it is to let the client conversationally express their depressed feelings while the counselor listens and seeks insight with the purpose of creating an atmosphere where the depressed client feels accepted. Then, after a while, the client

⁴⁰ Freud, Sigmund, “Mourning and Melancholia” in *General Psychological Theory*, ed. Philip Rielt, *Sigmund Freud: Collected Papers* (New York: Collier, 1917), 164.

⁴¹ C. G. Jung, *Letters: Volume 2: 1951-1961* (Princeton, NJ: Bollingen/Princeton University Press, 1976), 492-493.

⁴² Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 160-161.

begins to interview himself, weighs the issues, gains insight and self-understanding about his condition, makes certain decisions from his own personal internal resources about the matter and ultimately solves the problem within himself.

Skinner developed behavior modification practices that have the only true answer to depression that derives from man's social environment. He denied the dignity of man as created in the image of God and claimed that sin and salvation are nothing but baseless myths. These rebellious presuppositions led Skinner to conclude that man is to be manipulated and reinforced. In other words, if the environment can be controlled in a utopian and scientific manner, the person can be then controlled and ultimately cured from their depressive mindset. Manipulate the environment to manipulate the depressed man and the proper behavior will eventually follow. Or in other words, "Discover the proper type of dog biscuit [discover the pertinent contingencies in a given environment] and feed her appropriately according to schedule [manipulate the contingencies appropriately], any husband can train his wife to bark three times, roll over twice and go out and retrieve the evening newspaper in her teeth [perform in a capable way by responding to these stimuli]."⁴³

Puritan History – Who Were the Puritans?

First coined in the 1560's, the English term "Puritan" was derived as a sort of sarcastic, condescending label for those who held contrary political and religious beliefs of the day. They differed politically in that they were opposed to the Stuart monarchy. As skilled, often highly educated, Bible-believing Protestant pastors, they sought to purify the church of their day due to their discontentment with the religious principles and practices of

⁴³ Ibid., 163-164.

the Elizabethan Church of England.⁴⁴ As J.I. Packer describes:

Sober, conscientious, and cultured citizens: persons of principle, devoted, determined, and disciplined, excelling in the domestic virtues, and with no obvious shortcomings save a tendency to run to words when saying anything important, whether to God or to man.⁴⁵

The Puritans not only battled with the church and episcopate leadership establishment of their day, they also clashed with the culture of their time. The church at the time was not only solely in charge of spiritual matters, they also had heavy influence and total control of temporal and societal living. Much like the Reformers who opposed the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church system before them, the bold Puritan movement of internal church activism took the baton of their Protestant predecessors and opposed the leadership of the Church of England. Amidst of all this controversy and horrible persecution, the Puritans were eventually dubbed as ‘nonconformists’ and then warned, sanctioned and abolished from preaching in England via the Uniformity Act of 1662.

More importantly, and for the purposes of this paper, the Puritans were much more than a just a pious, religious, countercultural movement opposed to the established church of their day. They were viewed as “sainthood visible”⁴⁶ due to their God-centered, holy living, Puritan leaders were regarded as highly qualified and competent to counsel the depressed because they were “the most biblical race of men outside the Testaments [whom] applied a deep doctrinal sense and spiritual wisdom to the various problems, especially depression and

⁴⁴ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), ix.

⁴⁵ J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 22.

⁴⁶ Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism*, (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996), 12.

discouragements, under which God's people have always had to labour in life."⁴⁷

At this point, readers might question the authority and credibility of Puritan counseling methods pertaining to a complex topic such as depression due to characterizing the 16th century Puritanical counseling methods as unscientific or archaic in they are not reliable in light of today's latest scientific studies and advanced knowledge of human psychology. It should serve as a reminder that:

Pastoral psychology reached its zenith in the Puritans, Pietist and evangelical movements. Writers like Richard Baxter, John Owen, George Herbert, William Law, John Gerhardt, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and John Newton developed sophisticated and nuanced understandings of psychospiritual problems – like sin, melancholy, assurance and spiritual desertions – and how to promote spiritual healing and development in Christ.⁴⁸

This abbreviated historical timeline and perspective of the basic Puritan background is mentioned as a much needed, necessary context to demonstrate that fact that while some would have settled for status quo, or surrendered in their fight for God-glorifying reasons, the Puritans did not. In fact, it is believed that this struggle with suffering and persecution made them who they were. As a result they were and continue to be ideal candidates to deal with and counsel others who are suffering and depressed because they were personally forged and purified through affliction in their own lives. Packer goes on to commend them in this way:

They were great souls serving a great God. In them clear-headed passion and warm-hearted compassion combined. Visionary and practical, idealistic and realistic too, goal-oriented and methodical, they were great believers, great hoppers, great doers, and great sufferers. But their sufferings... seasoned and ripened them till they gained a stature that was nothing short of heroic. Ease and luxury, such as our affluence brings us today, do not make for maturity; hardship and struggle however do, and the Puritans' battles against the spiritual and climatic wildernesses in which God set them produced a virility

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁸ Johnson, 13.

of character, undaunted and unsinkable, rising above discouragement and fears... They hung on by the skin of their teeth. But the moral and spiritual victories that the Puritans won by keeping sweet, peaceful, patient, obedient, and hopeful under sustained and seemingly intolerable pressures and frustrations give them a place of high honor in the believers' hall of fame.⁴⁹

Timeline

Even though they are dubbed as “physicians of the soul,” counseling and care for the soul is something that neither originated with nor was it discovered by the Puritans. Therefore, one cannot and should not bypass or overlook definitions and depression theories, concepts and findings handed down from our Hebrew, Greek and Christian heritage.

In the ancient world, Greek physician Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.) was the first to document “melancholia as black bile running through the organism, producing undesirable effects, such as an aversion to food, despondency, sleeplessness, irritability and restlessness.”⁵⁰ As a result, he painstakingly expanded upon the common thought of his day that the astrological gods Zeus (fire), Hera (air), Aidoneus (earth), and Nestis (water) were actually elements that corresponded to bodily fluids known as the four *humors*: blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. With this he devised an ancient temperament theory of personality types which said,

Health depended upon the proper balance of those humors in the body and that illnesses were caused by an imbalance of the bodily fluids... [believing] that people had different proportions of the humors with one humor more or less dominant... [concluding] that people had different proportions of the humors with one humor more or less dominant.⁵¹

Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) later picked up on the prior humoral theories of Hippocrates and expanded upon them by studying how they related to the body

⁴⁹ Packer, 22-23.

⁵⁰ Polischuk, 15.

⁵¹ Martin Bobgan and Deidre Bobgan, *Four Temperaments, Astrology & Personality*

and mind. “Aristotle also wrote extensively about the relationship of black bile to a melancholy temperament... and concluded that mental and emotional disturbances were of physical origin.”⁵²

Physician and Greek philosopher Claudius Galen of Pergamon (130-200) then came along and corroborated by further advancing these humoral theories of his predecessors. He was one of the first to systematically present it to the Roman world as he focused upon black bile and how it consequentially reared itself into an eventual trait called melancholy.⁵³

Coming along centuries later, Christians Augustine (354-430) and Gregory the Great (540-604) proved to be familiar with the writings and discoveries of the Greek founders before them. They too borrowed from these earlier humoral findings and advanced them further by placing such findings as black bile and melancholy into a Christian/theological construct as it relates to the inner person. Having done this, they are credited for being the first to officially write about and document the theology and practice of soul care/curing (from the Latin “cura animarum”) in the church:

Augustine’s *Confessions* pioneered the idea that there is an inner life... [and he wrote of] various ways in which people’s desires become disordered. Gregory... pioneered diverse ways of dealing with a fearful person, a brash and impulsive person, an angry person, an overly passive person. He broke out these different struggles and sought to apply explicitly biblical, Christ-centered medicine—full of Christ, full of grace, full of gospel, and full of the hard call of God’s Word to the challenges of life.⁵⁴

All of this background history and contextual information is mentioned as an

Testing (Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 1992), 24-25.

⁵² Ibid., 27.

⁵³ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁴ David Powlison, "Looking at the Past and Present of Counseling," *9Marks*, November/December, 2008.

abbreviated backdrop in order to show the origins of the Puritanical thought and how they too used and incorporated some of these foundational Greek discoveries and terminology into their own seventeenth century diagnosis and counseling practices. It is apparent after reading some Puritan counseling literature that they unashamedly borrowed from and built upon the shoulders of well-respected philosophers and theologians who lived before them. So to give the sixteenth century Puritans all of the praise for their discoveries pertaining to specific depression counseling techniques may be giving them too much credit.

Major Puritan Characters Who Counseled the Depressed

Since there is such a vast array of counseling examples and techniques demonstrated by thousands of preserved and published writings of Puritan pastors and theologians on the topic of melancholy/depression, four (Richard Baxter, William Bridge, Timothy Brooks and Timothy Rogers) stand out due to their personal experience with melancholy and have therefore been selected for the focus and scope of this thesis project. Multiple samples, quotations and primary writings sources will be taken from their publications as they are compared, contrasted and synthesized in order to illustrate their counseling beliefs and practices pertaining to the contributing factors associated with depression and how it was dealt with in their historical and theological context.

Beliefs About Depression

In the 1649 classic entitled, *A Lifting Up for the Downcast*, pastor William Bridge's preaching to those discouraged to the point of paralyzing depression is captured in thirteen sermons in Stepney, London. He begins with the premise that the presence of discouragement and despair will be evident in the life of every God-fearing believer and writes nothing about whether depression should be present or not. Bridge's expository

sermon series is taken from Ps 42:11 which says: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”

From this single verse (which will be discussed in more detail later in a section on the Psalmists and their battle with moderate depression), Bridge systematically draws out and lists nine possible sources and factors contributing to depression in Christian believers: 1) Sin 2) Grace 3) Worship 4) Assurance 5) Temptation 6) Desertion 7) Affliction 8) Service and 9) Discouragement.⁵⁵ Due to space limitations, these items will only be briefly discussed below as causes that the Puritans attributed to the main depressive contributors attacking believers. It should also be noted that while Bridge was one of the first Puritans to accurately systematize, diagnose and list these depressive factors, other Puritans, such as Richard Baxter, Thomas Brooks, and Timothy Rogers of the same time period likewise concurred and contributed similar sentiments and categorizations on the matter. These noted contemporaries of Bridge may have used slightly different terms, descriptions and categorizations, but as will be shown later in the paper, they were in general agreement with the nine items of possible diagnosis and how they were manifested in the life of a believer. Here are the nine Puritan beliefs about depression, a brief explanation and an accompanying quote to demonstrate Puritan recognition of each belief as potential causes of depression, desertion and loss of peace.

Sin

William Bridge specifically speaks of vast and vulgar sin in a believer’s life.

⁵⁵ William Bridge, *A Lifting Up for the Downcast* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth

“Puritans considered sin to be criminal and devoted much attention to it”⁵⁶ and sought to perpetually mortify it – not that it can be totally eradicated on this side of Heaven, but to weaken sin’s power. Puritan Stephen Charnock gets to the heart of the matter and wrote:

All sin is found in secret atheism.... Every sin is a kind of cursing God in the heart, an aim at the destruction of the being of God, not actually, but virtually.... A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory at the end of his actions.⁵⁷

While the Puritans explicitly taught that Christians should be deeply bothered by their personal sin, they also emphasized that it should not cause them to lose hope or sight of a loving and forgiving God. More detailed information about the Puritan view of sin as it relates to the cause of depression will be covered later in the section entitled, Puritan Causes, Cures and Guiding Principles: Man is Sinful and Guilty

Grace

Bridge wrote about the concept of weak grace as a means of discouraging depression. His concern was that weak Christians are more apt to “stumble and fall...and if he does fall, less able to rise again...and is more easily quenched in regard to his comforts than a strong Christian is...and cannot glorify God as the strong Christian... a strong Christian will do great things for God... tend the interests of others... able to wait long on God... but a weak Christian cannot.”⁵⁸

Trust, 2001), 5.

⁵⁶ Sarles, Ken L, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, ed. John F. MacArthur and Wayne A. Mack (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1994), 34.

⁵⁷ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 93.

⁵⁸ Bridge, 88-91.

Worship

The Puritans referred to the abuse or neglect of basic disciplines of the means of grace as a “miscarriage of duties.” Malfeasance such as this led to prayerlessness and the discouraged individual became increasingly gloomy and felt more distant from God. “So thick may be the darkness that prayer dies on our lips. The heavens are sealed. Truth becomes the mockery of meaningless words.”⁵⁹ Puritan advice consisted of actively doing what ought to be done (duty) instead of relying upon feelings.

Go to God in prayer. If your heart then be straightened, if your heart be hard, and if your spirit be dull in duty, you may go to God and open your sores and wounds before him. You may go and say, Lord, what a hard heart have I, and what a dull and straightened spirit have I! This rather befits a beggar, and you must come as a beggar when you come before him.⁶⁰

Assurance

Depression in the life of a believer often causes them to question their salvation. The Puritans often counseled people to be patient and “wait but a little, He will return again.”⁶¹ They also taught that this lack of assurance may result from demonic accusations of the conscience. But they knew that knowledge of such things can be only known to a certain degree on this side of eternity:

Our assurance of heaven is not perfect. True believers shall still be deficient in this as well as in other things. We only know in part. If we have obtained assurance in some degree, the perfection of it will be found only in heaven. Our assurance and comforts are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He freely bestows them especially when his people are in the deepest necessity.⁶²

⁵⁹ John White, *The Masks of Melancholy: A Christian Physician Looks at Depression & Suicide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 53.

⁶⁰ Bridge, 113.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶² Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (New York: American Tract Society,

Temptation

The Puritans knew full well that temptation was alive and well in the life of fallen humanity. Jesus Himself was tempted (Heb 2:18; 4:15) yet never succumbed to it. Puritan counseling often dealt with those who were tempted to be rid of their depression by trusting in worldly remedies and cures by trusting in another Christ substituted for the true Christ of the Bible. John Owen harshly warned those who were tempted to do such in that it also endangered their salvation: “You have an imaginary Christ and if you are satisfied with an imaginary Christ you must be satisfied with imaginary salvation.”⁶³

Desertion

Puritan writings are replete with instances where individuals feel forgotten and abandoned as God removes His hand for disciplinary/sanctification reasons. God’s forsaking of a soul was a very dark and mournful time. But they counseled the discouraged to take heart and look to the eternal instead of just the here and now because “in this night, the deserted soul is overwhelmed with continual thoughts of holiness, majesty, and glory of the Lord... he can lift up his eyes towards heaven and see joy and comfort for him there.”⁶⁴ Desertion for the Puritans demonstrated that “God’s withdrawal is for the purpose of drawing believers closer to him, so that they will truly learn to live by faith in what they cannot see or feel. The feeling of God’s withdrawal forces us to seek him all the more.”⁶⁵

1830), 232.

⁶³ A.W. Tozer, *Gems from Tozer* (Camp Hill, PA: Wingspread, 1979), 24.

⁶⁴ Rogers, 318.

⁶⁵ Mark Deckard, *Helpful Truths in Past Places: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 169.

Affliction

Depressive trials and tribulations experienced in their own personal lives would drive the Puritans to the Word of God for help and comfort: “God [afflicts] so that we may put a high value on the Scriptures, that we may search and look into them with more earnestness and frequency, to see there are any promises in them that are reviving, and place in them that may afford hope and comfort to souls so miserable and guilty.”⁶⁶

Service

The Puritans often admonished those who failed to use their spiritual gifts for service purposes – especially when it came to their communal, day to day employment. Depression or discouragement was no reason to shirk one’s Christian duties (aka unserviceableness).

Not only were best efforts required for religious duties as Puritan Thomas Brooks wrote, one of “Satan’s devices to keep souls from holy duties, to hinder souls in holy services, & to keep them off from religious performances.”⁶⁷ but suitable and diligent work ethic was also expected in their domestic affairs as service to others and God. Honoring their masters (employers) was a reflection of how they honored God: “The more useful and serviceable a man is to God, the more apt and ready God will be to pardon his failings; not only the failings of his present employment, but of the other part of his life also.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Rogers, 146.

⁶⁷ Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 102.

⁶⁸ Bridge, 215-216.

Discouragement

This is the devolving condition, or downward cycle of becoming more depressed from being discouraged resulting from the original condition of being depressed. It is a hopeless, spiraling down due to ongoing, sinful responses and decisions (see Appendix 4).

Counseling those who are depressed entails helping them to see the ‘bigger picture’ of their lives and of the world around them. Not in such a way to trivialize their struggles, but to help them take off the ‘blindness’ so they can see all that God has done, is doing, and will do in their lives and in the life of his church.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Deckard, 172.

CHAPTER 2

DIAGNOSIS

This chapter will focus on the diagnosis of depression. It will first purpose to show how secular psychology categorizes depression and distinguishes it by varying levels of mild, moderate and severe. Secondly, Puritan diagnosis and their accompanying indicators of depression will be discussed as an attempt to incorporate Biblical studies into this thesis assignment. Background and pertinent Biblical information along with several examples from Scripture as diagnostic assertions pointing to a depressed condition will be presented as accompanying and supporting evidence.

While much has been written about the negative aspects and practices of secular psychology, the field does deserve credit for being able to properly and accurately diagnose problematic personal disorders:

Psychology can be very helpful when it provides a *descriptive function* in describing problems. For example, if a doctor were to observe the effects of an eating disorder on a person emotionally, mentally, and physically, it would be useful in understanding how the eating disorder has affected that person.¹

At the same time, it should be mentioned that secular psychology has its weaknesses in that it merely provides a *prescriptive function* in prescribing solutions.

Psychology in this capacity does not address man's heart, but only addresses the symptoms or behaviors, when the realities that need to be dealt with are the root issues of the heart.²

¹ Ben Neff, "Counseling Philosophy: Biblical Counseling vs. Psychology," *Christ-Centered Counseling*, nd.

² Ibid.

This section will focus on the diagnosis of depression. It will describe what depression looks like from both a secular/psychological view and contrasted with the how the Puritans identified depression in the life of a believer.

Secular Psychology Diagnosis

When one is first diagnosed with depression, it is important that the degree or severity is identified in order to properly treat the counselee. In psychiatric terminology, depression is typically diagnosed and divided into three distinct categories: mild, moderate and severe. This is done in order to distinguish it from normal and common low periods that many people go through.

Mild Depression

Signs of the blues or minor depression can and do vary from person to person. Subtle signals like discouragement, disappointment, fluctuating moods and sadness are usually exhibited in the counselee's life as they realize that something is wrong. A loss of interest in their work or the ceasing of enjoyable hobbies may also be indicators of depression in its mildest form. Additional diagnostic items such as uncharacteristic sleep patterns, appetite and fatigue are also gauges that may point to mild depression.

Moderate Depression

One will be diagnosed with a moderate level of depression if their symptoms listed at the mild level become more persistent and pronounced. An overall feeling of heaviness takes over, thus taking extra time to get going and moving. Therefore the mornings are typically the most difficult part of the day for the moderately depressed as their mood gradually lightens and they become more energized throughout the day. Relationships with

others tend to devolve or become strained because individuals in this category begin to pull away and noticeably withdraw from friends and family due to their melancholia state of mind.

Severe Depression

While it is not an exhaustive list of signals, the psychiatric diagnostic criteria for severe (major) depression list nine symptoms, as follows:

1. Depressed mood, sadness, irritability part of each day, nearly every day
2. Diminished pleasure or interest in daily activities
3. Considerable weight loss or gain, change in appetite
4. Significant change in sleeping patterns (The most common result is early waking)
5. Marked increase or decrease in movement (Most commonly the person physically slows down)
6. Fatigue and loss of energy
7. Feelings of worthlessness or guilt (The feelings are beyond the scope of how people would usually feel)
8. Difficulty in concentration
9. Ideas of suicide or death³

According to the American Psychological Association criteria, “persons must exhibit at least five symptoms for a minimum of two weeks, and have either depressed mood or diminished pleasure or interest on most days for at least part of the day”⁴ to determine if someone should be correctly diagnosed with major depression.

Puritan Diagnosis and Biblical Examples

While they did not formally categorize depression into mild, moderate and severe classifications like secular psychology does, the Puritans were no strangers to pinpointing,

³ Howard W. Stone, *Depression and Hope: New Insights for Pastoral Counseling* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 65-66.

⁴ American Psychiatric Association (APA), *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

labeling and diagnosing the problem of depression in the life of a believer. Even though they staunchly believed that people of God had no real reason to be depressed⁵, they were quick to also realize that in the fallen world in which they lived, discouraging depression was a reality to be dealt with. As a result, the Puritans were able to recognize and diagnose the depraved heart issues that secular psychology refuses to deal with.

According to Pastor Geoff Thomas' sermon entitled, *The Puritans on Depression*, the Puritans were wise, astute and ahead of their time when it came to properly labeling and accurately diagnosing depression based upon following five outward signs and the accompanying conditions that plagued them:

- 1) Persistent – the presenting problem could not be dealt with. It was a nagging issue that would not go away. It lasts long after the thing that triggered it goes away. The problem should not last for years.
- 2) Immoderate – the problem is blown out of proportion. Small issues should not cause one's life to crumble. An overreaction is out of proportion to the original issue and does not compare to the seriousness of the burden.
- 3) Paralyzing – A do nothing, failure to act, unmotivated desire to do anything. Loss of energy, drive and desire is gone. Sorrow is allowed to remain and takes the individual out of action. They withdraw from church life and become spectators doing nothing for the Lord.
- 4) Self-destructive – Strong feelings of utter failure. Dark thoughts endure. Questions the point of remaining in this life.
- 5) Self-depreciating – Feels totally useless. Thoughts of repudiation. Sees no value in being created in God's image. Feelings of hopelessness and a burden to be who they are. Loss of confidence and assurance of being a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).⁶

Another unique foundational factor that was essential and characteristic about

⁵ William Bridge, *A Lifting Up for the Downcast* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 67.

⁶ Geoff Thomas, "The Puritans on Depression," *Monergism*, nd.

Puritan diagnosis pertaining to depression, and one that has been carried on throughout the centuries and applied in many of today's Christian counseling practices, is that the depressed counselee should have both the short-term goal of an abundant life here on earth as well as having a long-term goal of life in heaven:

The counselor who follows Jesus Christ has the same ultimate goals of showing people how to have abundant lives and of pointing individuals to the eternal life that is promised to believers [and that] evangelism and discipleship, therefore, are the Christian counselor's ultimate goals, even though they are not the only goals.⁷

Also worth mentioning is that the Puritans were extremely careful in their diagnosis of depression. This meant that they did not view things such as sorrow, grief, and bereavement as forms of depression. In fact, they would say that such feelings are perfectly normal and natural for the Christian.

It is interesting and significant to notice how frequent it was for the devout Puritan to be troubled in spirit; either as to the lawfulness of something he was doing or contemplating, or as to the exactness of his doctrinal views. It is a lasting feature of the spiritually refined and well-educated soul that it is eager and urgent not to allow any known sin to go unchallenged in life, and desires to exalt the truth of God, even in every aspect of its religious thinking. This sensitivity to possible error in conduct, doctrine, and spiritual standing was a mark of the Puritan congregations... as a necessary part of the new birth and truly indicative of spiritual life begun within the heart.⁸

In other words, Puritan counselors were *not* overzealous in labeling all sorrow and affliction as depression. In fact, they were staunch in the notion that it was not Biblical or spiritually healthy to have all kinds of sad experiences driven out of a Christian's life. They would teach that Christians needed occasional heartbreak and were therefore correctly characterized and known for a certain gravity, seriousness and solemnity in their lives due to

⁷ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Dallas, Tx: Word Publishing, 1988), 39.

⁸ Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism*, (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996), 64.

dealings with the brokenness of their fellow man exhibiting the dire consequences and nature of this fallen world. Based upon the teaching from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3-4) which stressed the importance of being poor in spirit and mournful, the Puritans fully knew that Christians were to have a habitual sorrow for their own sin. As believers, one is to be discontent with their own standard of life because of their rebellion from God. Their heart should be humbled and broken by the Spirit while being convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment.⁹

To reiterate, the Puritans did not specifically use our contemporary terms to classify and categorize degrees of depression. But a strong case can be made that the Bible describes specific examples of people who were depressed in varying degrees. The following section will take a brief look at an example in each category of depression.

Jesus: A Mild Depression

Although Jesus was sinless, perfect and tempted (Heb 2:18; 4:15), by today's standards for categorizing depression, He would possibly be diagnosed with a mild form of depression. He was "despised and rejected by men" and called "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is 53:3) and spoke that he was "sorrowful unto death" (Mk 14:34) after being despised and deserted. His compassion, concern, and overwhelming sense of disappointment about people's sin and its deadly consequences in a fallen world also caused him great anguish.

As the God-man who suffered the scorn and rejection of those He came to save, Jesus also demonstrated great emotions and feelings which caused Him to verbalize an inner

⁹ Geoff Thomas, "The Puritans on Depression," *Monergism*, nd.

lament towards the Jewish people of his day as in Mt 23:37-39:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Jesus shows the tension of His humanity while at the same time submitting to the divine will of His Father here in that even though He is sovereign and had it within Himself to grant salvation to these people, He does not use His omnipotent sovereignty to bring it to pass. This human/divine tension and grief can be likened to Gn 6:6 when it says, "And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." But passages like this are also revealing of Jesus' divine character in that:

He is full of compassion, sincerely good to all, desirous of good, not evil—and therefore not delighting in the destruction of the wicked... The emotion displayed by Christ here is obviously a deep, sincere passion. All Christ's feelings must be in perfect harmony with the divine will and therefore these lamentations should not be thought of as mere exhibitions of His humanity.¹⁰

Several of well-known examples of Jesus' verbalized sorrow, disappointment and discouragement exhibiting a possible mild form of depression are:

Upon hearing the news that John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod it is said that, "he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself" (Mt 14:13)

When told about his friend Lazarus dying, and seeing Mary crying, "he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled... [and] Jesus wept" (Jn 11:33-35)

Praying in Gethsemane, he was, "greatly distressed and troubled... [and said] My soul is very sorrowful, even to death" (Mk 14:33-34)

These illustrations from the life of Christ are mentioned in order to show how one should properly and faithfully respond to such mildly depressive situations. Unlike those

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2010), 1403.

who might be tempted or caused to further fall into a moderate or severe level of depression from similar circumstances, it should be noted that “Christ always fulfilled his responsibilities in spite of his circumstances”¹¹ because He never lost hope, always glorified God in the midst of His trials and was always about the business of His Father and did the things that were pleasing to Him (Jn 8:29).

Christ’s sufferings and responses to such anguish serve as a model demonstrating that it is good and acceptable to feel, emote and verbally acknowledge one’s dire circumstance as long as submitting to those feelings are not causes for sin, hopelessness or dodging other Christian responsibilities. It is because of these instances of great sorrow and grief associated with Jesus that the Puritans did not view all such sadness, misery or bereavement as depression to be avoided. But rather, they rightly understood that, and to a proper extent, those emotions are normal and natural for humanity to experience as long as the circumstances of such depressive, life-altering sorrow was not sin-producing, persistent, immoderate, paralyzing, self-destructive or self-depreciating in the lives of their congregants.

The Psalmists: A Moderate Depression

There are dozens of Psalms that could be used to illustrate symptoms of moderate depression in the life of the Psalmists:

The penitence for sin in Ps 32:3-4: “For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.”

The Divine chastisement of Ps 38:5-8: “My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble

¹¹ Wayne Mack, *Out of the Blues: Dealing with the Blues of Depression & Loneliness* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2006), 5.

and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart.”

The desperation of Ps 69:1-3: “Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.”

But the one Psalm, that reoccurs throughout many of the Puritan’s writings, as the one classic depression lament of the Psalms that is also often referred to by theologians throughout the centuries is that of Ps 42:5, 42:11, 43:5 (which basically repeat each other): “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”

It is a favorite of preachers for its practicality, teachability and honest assessment and understanding of human drought and discouragement that we all feel from time to time. The pointedness of the Psalm resonates with the depressed in that it communicates a tugging and pulling and illustrates a battle to fight for joy within as the same lament is repeated within Psalm 42 (v5, v11; 43:5) because “the repetition of this admonition suggests that the writer was having his ‘ups and downs’ as he struggled with his circumstances and himself [because] his hopes had been shattered, his prayers were unanswered, his enemies were vocal, and his feelings were more than he could handle, *but God was still on the throne.*”¹²

Puritan writers often refer to Psalm 42 for didactic reasons along with its hope-filled teaching to praise and trust in God amidst difficult spiritual turmoil within. Skilled Puritan and spiritual surgeon of the heart William Bridge rightly exposit Ps 42:11 and diagnoses the problem in that the downcast person needs to be reminded to trust and exercise faith by placing their hope in God in the midst of their condition. “Hope in God is to expect

¹² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 162-163.

help from God; to trust in God is to rely or rest upon God for help; and to wait on Him is to continue and abide in this expectation or reliance.”¹³ Bridge comes to this conclusion as he pinpoints two remedies that the Psalmist utilizes in working through his depression – self-reprehension and self-admonition which seem like odd starting points since

Depressed people usually are already negative about themselves and their lives... Bridge is pointing to a deeper understanding on [the Psalmist’s] part of how the condition of depression reveals his spiritual life... challenging himself for his distrust in God who has proved himself trustworthy over and over in his life. Then he calls upon himself to exercise faith by waiting upon God for his answer in his time... pointing to the obvious answer to depression – trust in God who is in control and has proved his love and care already at the Cross.¹⁴

Ps 42:11 is self-admonishing in teaching that instead of being something that someone surrenders to, depression should be something that is proactively battled. The voice of depression should be the culpability of the believer to actively talked to and fought against rather than passively listened to.¹⁵ In other words, it must be handled through overt belief rather than surrendering to unbelief. One must remember God because the depressed often forget about God. As the well-known British pastor-physician D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones taught that the first thing to do when these feelings and depressive thoughts come along to:

You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: ‘Why art thou cast down’ – what business have you to be disquieted? You must turn on yourself, unbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: Hope thou in God’ – instead of muttering in this depressed unhappy way. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: ‘I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance, who is also the health of my

¹³ Bridge, 262-263.

¹⁴ Mark Deckard, *Helpful Truths in Past Places: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2010),153.

¹⁵ Edward T. Welch, *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2004), 97.

countenance and my God.’¹⁶

The Psalms are often mischaracterized as being too pessimistic and focused on the gloomy side of the human condition. And in a similar sentiment, the Puritans too are often criticized for their ongoing, obsessive aspects of morbid introspection. And those who read their writings often can become depressive themselves due to their morbid, self-analysis.¹⁷ But like the Psalms, the Puritans have the highest view of the mercy and grace of God combined with a proper view of their own sin and unworthiness which gave them balance thus not allowing their introspection to consume them but rather, it caused them to flee to the cross of Christ even more.

Job: A Severe Depression

As often observed by Christian counselors, a common trait among severely depressed believers is the uncanny obsession and curiosity that draws them to the wise but gloom-filled books of the Bible for solace and guidance. This might be because: Melancholy persons are very apt to seize on the dark side of religion, as affording food for the morbid state of their minds.”¹⁸

To read and study the Puritans, it is as if they intuitively knew this about the people they were attempting to help. Out of all the Scriptural citations and reference used in Puritan ministry to the afflicted, it seems that they drew upon Ecclesiastes and Job the most. This is likely because the book of Ecclesiastes was consulted for its reoccurring theme that

¹⁶ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 21.

¹⁷ David Powlison, "Biblical Counseling and the Puritans," *Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF)*.

¹⁸ Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience* (Edinburgh: The Banner of

“everything is meaningless” which probably resonated with a depressed individual under their care. But most of the Puritan writings pertaining to severely depressed, shows that the book of Job was more often used as a comforting staple because it seemed to truly understand and empathize with the afflicted condition.

For many, Job is the quintessential example of how to handle severe affliction. And there is something in the story that all depressed people can share in common with Job and relate to his dire predicament. While the tragic carnage, pain, evil and suffering is quite disturbing, there is something comfortable about the fact that within the story of Job, “God doesn’t specifically explain why he permits evil and suffering to fall upon us. He wants us to trust him. In one sense, Job is everyman.”¹⁹

After suffering the Satanic losses of his property, cattle and children due to catastrophic disasters, it was said of Job that he did not sin nor charged God with any wrong as he declared, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Jb 1:21-22). And when his physical health was Satanically attacked by an outbreak of sores and boils, his own wife lashed out at him and suggested that he should just “curse God and die.” But even in all of this turmoil, Job responded with great faith and integrity this profound yet rhetorical question, “Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” And even in the midst of all this personal horror it is said of Job that he “did not sin with his lips” (Jb 2:9-10).

Even though he may not have outwardly spoken at that point about his pain and misery, and as a man who was initially described as “blameless and upright, one who feared

Truth Trust, 1989), 46.

¹⁹ Randy Alcorn, *If God is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado

God and turned away from evil” (Jb 1:1), a cursory look at some of the depression-like statements from his own mouth demonstrate that there were some deep-seeded thoughts of severe despair going on within his head and heart. Four kinds of descriptive language appear in Job chapter 3:

- lament language: cursed the day of his birth (v1); why did I not die at birth (v11)
- hopeless language: darkness, night, gloom, clouds, gloom, no light (vv3-10)
- death language: dying at birth, expire, lain down, quiet, rest, slept, stillborn, longing for death, find the grave (vv11-26)
- emotional language: misery, bitter, sighing, groaning, fear, dread, trouble (vv20-26)

One commentator sums it up this way: “The third chapter of Job must be one of the most depressing chapters in the Bible... It is the lowest of several low points in the book.”²⁰ And since the counseling process relies heavily upon verbal communication, self-deprecating verbiage such as Job’s would automatically be flagged as language used by someone who is severely depressed and in need of immediate care.

It almost seems that Job’s own words (Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?) to quiet his wife back in 2:10 have come back to haunt him because in his own, self-described, hopeless state, Job “seems to have forgotten the good old days when the Lord gave abundantly. Now his eyes focused only on “trouble.”²¹

From his own pen, Puritan pastor Richard Baxter likely had to counsel someone in a similar situation as Job and reminded them of the curses and cunningness of Satan’s hand in

Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2009), 192.

²⁰ Robert L. Alden, *The New American Commentary: Job* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 71.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

depression as contrasted with the goodness, grace and faithful promises of God:

That for Satan to possess the body is no certain sign of a graceless state, nor will this condemn the soul of any, if the soul itself be not possessed. Nay, there are few of God's children but it is like are sometimes afflicted by Satan, as the executioner of God's correcting them, and sometimes of God's trials, as in the case of Job; whatsoever some say to the contrary, it is likely that the prick in the flesh, which was Satan's messenger to buffet Paul, was some such pain as the stone, which yet was not removed, that we find, after thrice praying, but only he had a promise of sufficient grace.²²

Baxter then goes on to write that Satan can cause temptations and inject streams of sinful and blasphemous thoughts and doubts into the mind but Satan "cannot do what he will with us, but what we give him advantage to do. He cannot break open our doors, but he can enter if we leave them open. He can easily tempt a ... phlegmatic body to sloth ... a choleric person to anger ... a sanguine man to lust."²³

Like Jesus' laments of being forsaken (Mt 15:34), Job likewise believes that God has abandoned him when he asks these kind of questions: "Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?" (Jb 13:24). "Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you?" (Jb 7:20). And then Job's friend, Elihu, rightly remind him that it is God's prerogative to abandoned men or nations if He chooses to do so: "When he is quiet, who can condemn? When he hides his face, who can behold him, whether it be a nation or a man?" (Jb 34:29). Elihu's advice sounds very Puritan-like as they too often counseled people about God's ultimate sovereignty to do as he pleases, even if it feels like desertion at the time. But Job's friends were wrong in that

[They thought] that God loved them and was their friend, and Job's enemy. Yet if you look at Job 42 you will find that God was more pleased with Job than with them... And

²² Baxter, Richard, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: Volume XVII*, ed. William Orme, *The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith and Physic* (London: Paternoster, 1830), 247.

²³ *Ibid.*, 248.

know you not that it is Christ's usual manner to personate an enemy when he intends the most friendship, to seem a stranger when he intends the most communion.²⁴

Even though Job felt like God was somehow punishing him describing the pain as arrows laced with poison, "For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me" (Jb 6:4), he eventually recognized God's overwhelming grace in the midst of his burden of depressive troubles. At the end of the book, in chapter 42, Job's confession, repentance, the rebuke of his friends and the double restoration of his lost fortune is described with the lesson that depression and suffering is a basic human condition. "And can we not in our own small way suffer with Job, and with him come to the blessed discovery that life on this earth is only made bearable by the fleeting visions of a good and kindly God which, by his grace and pity, are ours from time to time?"²⁵

²⁴ Bridge, 179.

²⁵ John C. Gibson, *Job: The Daily Study Bible Series* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 267.

CHAPTER 3

CAUSES AND CURES

When it comes down to pinpointing causes and cures for depression, secular psychology and Puritan methodology could not be more at odds. Systematic theology will be incorporated within the subtopics of this chapter in an attempt to focus on the glaring differences between psychological and Puritan cures and causes as both sets of ideologies and guiding principles will be compared and contrasted in the following three areas of: authority (Bibliology), God (theology proper), and man (anthropology).

Secular Psychology Causes, Cures and Guiding Principles

Secular psychology often boasts of being a scientific discipline. And by definition, anything considered to be within the realm of science means that practitioners deal in the areas of empirical, quantified evidences that are observable, measurable and repeatable. These objective components are necessary for something to be considered scientific by nature. But as psychological history demonstrates, objective, fact-filled science is not the rule but rather the exception. Even on the somewhat factual side of the medical model of secular psychology, subjectivity seems to undergird much of the field as it too tends to lean on the latest and greatest emotional, feeling-based studies that rule the day. Because of the immense influence by organizations such as the American Psychological Association, almost any type of anecdotal experiment or loose observation of human behavior gets documented, and are deemed as irrefutable scientific facts.

So it is hardly surprising that “Science” has become the Gucci label of the Psychology Industry, enhancing, even if falsely, its credibility by implying quality, reliability and excellence. It goes without questioning that what is sold is “safe and effective.”¹

Appropriately labeled as *junk science* these so-called, psychological “facts” then gather a wide-spreading credibility as they go unquestioned and unchecked gaining more approval and acceptance while eventually being applied to unsuspecting counselees under the honorable intentions of helping people.

If secular psychology is this baseless and subjective, and proves to be nothing more than a pseudoscience, one has to wonder why it is so popular, highly-recommended and accessible. Possibly, one of the main reasons that secular psychology seems to be the first place people go when seeking out a cure for their depression is that “we live in a world that both seeks and dispenses easy and quick answers to even deep-seated difficulties and questions.”² The alternative to quick fixes is hard work over a long period of time. Human nature seems to be that people want the maximum results from the least amount of effort. It is no wonder why secular psychology fits in well with our microwave society. This section will discuss how the authority of man with no need for God because of their goodness and innocence governs the thoughts of secular psychology.

Authority of Man

Instead of studying man from the viewpoint of the revealed Word of God, psychologists study man through subjective observation of the self and by the self. Based upon their divergent beliefs and often contradictory solutions, secular psychologists seem to

¹ Tana Dineen, *Manufacturing Victims: What the Psychology Industry is Doing to People* (Westmount, Quebec, Canada: Robert Davies Multimedia Publishing, 1998), 139.

² Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Deserted by God* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 12.

devise theories that are based upon subjective views of themselves and others they study thus revealing their main source of authority as themselves. In other words, they have deliberately overlooked and rejected the guidance and wisdom of the God of the Bible as their main source for their foundational psychological doctrines of man.

As the new and acceptable secular priests of people's souls, psychology has gladly stepped in to pick up the ball as the guiding force from the church that fumbled it long ago. Instead of resting on the sole authority of God's Word, Evangelicalism integrated and merged secular psychological theories and practices with religion thereby creating a powerless, ineffective, hybrid version of Biblical counseling. As a direct result of becoming like the world, no longer do the depressed see value or long-term, spiritual results and thus no longer seek the counsel of authoritative clergyman, but rather turn to psychologists as the more credible and trusted (oxymoronic sounding) secular theologians of the soul. David Powlison explains why and how this happened:

Counterfeits of pastoral care filled the vacuum for the scientifically enlightened and liberal. [The church] did not develop to tackle new changes. They did not become wise, penetrating, and persuasively biblical counselors. The vacuum in pastoral theology and pastoral counseling set the stage for the psychological invasion we are now experiencing. Psychology is persuasive existentially because it is case-wise, empirically detailed and practiced in talking about and facilitating change processes... Psychology rings bells experientially. It comes in the ideological guise of "science." Psychology is persuasive in exactly in areas where the evangelical church is weak and has been weak for more than two centuries.³

No Need for God

While secular psychologists are typically open to their counselees having a "Higher Power"⁴ to guide and help them through their various maladies, they are hostile to

³ David Powlison, "Integration or Inundation?," in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*, ed. Horton, Michael Scott (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1992).

⁴ Bobgan and Bobgan, *Prophets of Psychoheresy II* (Santa Barbara, CA: Eastgate

God and His truths contained within the Scriptures. In fact, much of secular psychology is based upon and held together with these four common pagan presuppositions: atheism, relativism, evolutionism and nihilism.⁵ With core beliefs such as these, it is quite obvious that it eventually leads to the corresponding false conclusions that if God is not needed, and there is no absolute truth to adhere to, and if man is a mere creature of his animal heritage, and if there is no real purpose in life other than what is constructed in the human mind, then what difference does it all make? And with that kind of dismal construct, one has to wonder where any hope for change and better days ahead can come from for a depressed person seeking secular psychological answers.

Man is Good and Innocent

While secular psychology often tries to separate itself from any vestiges of historic, orthodox, Biblical associations, they do proudly hold to at least three of their own self-propagating commandments. The first foundational commandment of the psychological trade is the premise that mankind is good for the most part. And the second commandment, which hinges on the first, is that if man is indeed as good as psychology claims, then people should accept themselves just as they are.⁶

Even though these two commandments of secular psychology seem to fit seamlessly together, it is not the end of the story. Because if one were to take those notions literally, and extrapolate the circumstances, it would put the profession out of business, and

Publishers, 1990), 250.

⁵ Andrew J. Peterson, "Pastoral Counseling: Lesson 5-Anti-Depressant Fact Book" (Lecture, Charlotte, NC, 2008).

⁶ William Kirk Kilpatrick, *The Emperor's New Clothes: The Naked Truth About the New Psychology* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1985), 20.

here is why: If people are good overall and fine just the way they are, there is no true need for psychology. And this kind of thinking does not get many people banging down the doors for a chance to lay on the couches of the neighborhood psychologist's office with open wallets. So a third commandment or self-fulfilling prophecy is needed: "We are all sick, for normality is almost unattainable."⁷

Timothy Keller contrasts many of today's secular and modern evangelical counselors with the Puritans in that many "simply lack the firmness, directness, and urgency of the Puritans. Most of us talk less about sin than did our forefathers."⁸ This is largely due to the fact that secular psychology (and some evangelical counselors) rest on the foundational and false premise that man is basically good. And as a consequence, their conclusions are faulty.

Instead of studying man from the viewpoint of the revealed Word of God, psychologists study man through subjective observation of the self and by the self. Therefore the theories they devise say more about their own subjective view of themselves and others than about mankind as a whole... [and] reveal that they deliberately rejected the God of the Bible as the source for their psychological doctrines of man.⁹

Puritan Causes, Cures and Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of the Puritanical movement were threefold: "The New Testament pattern of personal piety, sound doctrine and a properly ordered Church-life."¹⁰ And it was the combination of these foundational, Biblical principles that proved to be

⁷ Martin L. Gross, *The Psychological Society: The Impact and the Failure of Psychiatry, Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis and the Psychological Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1978), 5.

⁸ Timothy J. Keller, "Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 3 (1988), 40.

⁹ Bobgan and Bobgan, *Prophets of Psychoheresy II*, 51-52.

¹⁰ Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism*, (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996), 11.

effective then within their congregations and continue to be implemented today as well-established, time-tested truth as they relate to counseling the depressed.

Following are contributing factors that the Puritans often wrote and preached about that caused, contributed to and aided in the recognition of cures to the melancholic depression of their day.

Authority of God

Personal piety in the life of a believer was emphasized in Puritan living. They not only stressed holy, devout living in the lives of others, they also held themselves to high standards of living. They stressed experiencing communion with God as the norm. “For the Puritan, intellectual assent to Christian doctrine had to be balanced with the practical outworking of God’s grace in life experiences.”¹¹

The Puritans were tireless in that they always pointed the depressed individual towards the Scriptures as their sole authority in dealing with any life-related affliction. “They learned who their people were and taught them Scripture in ways that would help them go through their day to day struggles, finding contentment and strength for the journey of the Christian life.”¹² It was not their own opinions that they were peddling and passing along to the hurting. Rather, and because they knew from first-hand experience that the Word brings life (2 Tm 3:16; Heb 4:12), they wanted others to likewise benefit from being Bible-saturated themselves.

¹¹ Randall C. Gleason and Kelly M. Kopic, "Who Were the Puritans?," in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, ed. Kopic, Kelly M. and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 25.

¹² Mark Deckard, *Helpful Truths in Past Places: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 14.

Like no other culture in recent history, the “Puritans were united in their dependence upon the Bible as their supreme source of spiritual sustenance and guide for the reformed life.”¹³ They knew that affliction made people more receptive to hearing and reading the Holy Scriptures in that “suffering so unbolts the door of the heart, that the Word hath easier entrance.”¹⁴ From the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, they demonstrated with their own personal lives that one should rely solely upon the Scriptures in all matters of faith and godliness as they had voracious appetite for the Word of God while instilling that same hunger to their listeners:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.¹⁵

In fact, one of the main characterizations of the Puritans was that to read their writings were almost like reading the Bible itself. Men like John Bunyan are prime examples from the Puritan era that ate, breathed, lived, preached and wrote in a way that exuded their high view and sole authoritative nature of the Scriptures:

Why, this man is a living Bible!’ Prick him anywhere; and you will find that his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his soul is full of the Word of God.¹⁶

It cannot be stressed enough that commitment to Scriptures was central to Puritan

¹³ Randall C. Gleason and Kelly M. Kopic, "Who Were the Puritans?," in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, ed. Kopic, Kelly M. and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 26.

¹⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (New York: American Tract Society, 1830), 246.

¹⁵ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Section 6, Chapter 1, 6. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

¹⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife and His Private Secretary: Volume 4, 1878-1892* (Bellingham,

living, teaching and counseling:

To the Puritan the Bible was in truth the most precious possession that this world affords. His deepest conviction was that reverence for God means reverence for Scripture, and serving God means obeying Scripture. To his mind, therefore, no greater insult could be offered to the Creator than to neglect his written word; and, conversely, there could be no truer act of homage to him than to prize it and pore over it, and then to live out and give out its teaching. Intense veneration for Scripture, as the living word of the living God, and a devoted concern to know and do all that it prescribes, was Puritanism's hallmark.¹⁷

High View of God

Sound doctrine was crucial for Puritan life in that it was a means to the end of establishing a high, exalted and glorified view of God. Proper doctrine led to holiness. And without holiness “no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). People of the Puritanical era, and still today, turn to the God-exalting teachings and writings of the Puritans because they are looking for something that the secular world just cannot offer. These God-fearing, counselors would have never thought to offer some secular, self-help, band-aid set of meaningless platitudes to hurting individuals. Their high and lofty view of God was like no other in that “the Puritans communion with God was a *great* thing, to evangelicals today it is a comparatively *small* thing. The Puritans were concerned about communion with God in a way that we are not.”¹⁸

The Puritans and their uncompromising adherence to sound doctrine produced not proud but humble men. They were humbled by the greatness of God. They recognized His majestic holiness as a stark contrast to the sinful depravity of mankind. The Puritans were likely familiar with the writings of John Calvin as a seminal forerunner to their own thought,

WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 2009), 268.

¹⁷ J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 98.

as he too wrote heavily on this idea of one knowing of the loftiness of God via sound theology. Calvin wrote that, “purity of doctrine is the soul of the church”¹⁹ and illustrated how correct doctrine would eventually lead to a high, and exalted view of a holy God:

With what better foundation can it begin than by reminding us that we must be holy, because “God is holy?” (Lv 19:1; 1 Pt 1:16). For when we were scattered abroad like lost sheep, wandering through the labyrinth of this world, he brought us back again to his own fold. When mention is made of our union with God, let us remember that holiness must be the bond; not that by the merit of holiness we come into communion with him (we ought rather first to cleave to him, in order that, pervaded with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls), but because it greatly concerns his glory not to have any fellowship with wickedness and impurity.²⁰

From the Scriptures and such writings from the Reformers, the Puritans knew the centrality of untarnished Biblical doctrine, rightly interpreted, led to a proper view of a holy God.

“If their doctrine of God elevated them, their doctrine of sin humbled them”²¹ as the proper doctrinal knowledge of the holy God led to a proper view of man in comparison. The Puritans knew that there was a direct correlation in that “wrong views about holiness are generally traceable to wrong views about human corruption.”²² With these doctrinal distinctive in place, they rightly knew that if they had the opportunity to impart pure, untarnished Scriptural doctrine of the knowledge of God into the mind of their counselees, like a hungry lion let out of its cage, the Word would do its work as promised: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of

¹⁸ Ibid., 215.

¹⁹ John Blanchard, *The Complete Gathered Gold* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2006), 151.

²⁰ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 446.

²¹ Lewis, 13.

soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

Man is Sinful and Guilty

In our modern-day cultural setting, sin does not get talked about very much. People seem to want to play the victim and blame others for their depressed condition. Labeling our violations against God as ‘shortcomings and mistakes’, sin often gets winked at and minimized as not such a big deal. But the Puritans thought much differently. They “followed Luther and Calvin’s emphasis on an Augustinian view of human depravity that requires God’s gracious initiative to work out salvation in the human heart.”²³ In their eyes, sin was the foundational and primary factor contributing to depression and the one common condition that all of mankind had to deal with because “all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

In contrast to much of today’s secular psychological theories which is founded on the faulty assumption that man is basically good and has the internal fortitude to pull himself up by his own bootstraps, Christianity begins with the foundational premise that mankind is not OK the way they are²⁴ but are instead sinners with wicked, depraved hearts (Jer 17:9; Rom 3:23). Jay Adams often writes about those who are depressed and in mental institutions “because of their own failure to meet life’s problems [and] because of their unforgiven and unaltered sinful behavior”²⁵ and that “the hope for depressed persons, as elsewhere, lies in

²² Blanchard, 301.

²³ Gleason and Kopic, 27.

²⁴ Kilpatrick, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, 20.

²⁵ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed

this: the depression is the result of the counselee's sin."²⁶

Puritan pastor Richard Baxter penned these words in the 1600s that accurately describes how one's sin not only causes sorrow, but lulls them to sleep in that sin is dismissed and minimized:

It is too notorious that overmuch sorrow for sin is not the ordinary case of the world. A stupid, blockish disposition is the common cause of men's perdition. The plague of a hard heart, and seared conscience, keeps most from all due sense of sin, or danger, or misery, and of all the great and everlasting concerns of their guilty souls. A dead sleep in sin doth deprive most of the use of sense and understanding.²⁷

Jay E. Adams, (founder of the Nouthetic counseling movement in the early 1970s with a philosophy that systematized and drew heavily from Puritanical methods), found that too many Christians were likewise lulled to sleep by their sin. He discovered words from the Greek New Testament, *nouthesia* and *noutheteo*, which means to admonish, correct, or instruct as found in Rom 15:14. Based upon this, Adams sought to confront sin in counselee's and that "bad feelings are the result of bad actions is the usual nouthetic remedy: 'If you do right, you feel right.' If you get depressed because of sinful behavior, then, obviously, you get better by righteous behavior."²⁸

In his classic, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, Adams illustrates (see Appendix 4) and explains in a Puritan-like fashion when he summarizes the downward spiral of depression from the result of sin:

Publishing Company, 1970), xvi.

²⁶ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), 378.

²⁷ Baxter, Richard, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: Volume XVII*, ed. William Orme, *The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith and Physic* (London: Paternoster, 1830), 237.

²⁸ David Murray, *Christians Get Depressed Too* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 17-18.

The downward cycle of sin moves from a problem to a faulty, sinful response, thereby causing an additional complicating problem which met by an additional sinful response, etc. That pattern needs to be reversed by beginning an upward cycle of righteousness resulting in further righteousness. Here the reverse pattern may be seen: a problem met by a biblical response leads to a solution which strengthens one's ability to solve new problems. The downward cycle enslaves one in hopelessness and guilt, thus bringing on a slowing down or cessation of activity, called depression.²⁹

Adams believes that even though a person may not be entirely responsible for the initial problem, they are directly responsible for handling it God's way, thus reversing the spiral and moving towards righteousness. So a strong rebuke by the counselor is in order along with a required repentance and confession by the counselee. The failure to repent and confess would then be a sinful reaction causing a downward, spiraling effect leading to more guilt and eventual and a more severe depression.

In a similar vein, the Puritans believed that the depressed believer should indeed be troubled by the sin in their life. Sin should be deeply disturbing to Christians in that they desire to eradicate it. William Bridge wrote, "The peace and quiet of the saints and people of God is many times interrupted by their sins."³⁰ In other words, to not feel guilt or shame would be abnormal. Sin disturbs a sound relationship with God. So it should not ever be trivialized but dealt with in the most severe manner. John Owen made a strong case that sin should be mortified to the point that one must "always be killing sin or it will be killing you."³¹

By its very nature, depression propels a person into a hopeless, downward, inward-focused spiral causing one to dwell on their personal failures, while overemphasizing life

²⁹ Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 375.

³⁰ William Bridge, *A Lifting Up for the Downcast* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 67.

³¹ John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 5.

struggles and seeing no immediate relief in sight. As a result, the depressed lose sight of God's love, care and promises for those who are in Christ (Rom 8:1) and see nothing but condemnation in their condition.

Since the Puritans believed that man's main problem is idolatrous self-worship, their counseling of depression included instructing their hearers of a properly ordered church life that included the nonnegotiable worship of the God of the Bible.³² Since man, by nature is created to worship and Glorify God (Is 43:7), and the "worship of God being perpetually due from the creature, the worshipping him as God is a perpetually his right"³³ man must, by default, worship something. It is only a matter of *what* or *whom* he will worship. For the deeply depressed who were likely self-absorbed and self-pitying of themselves (sinful, self-worshippers), Puritan counseling began with this sin issue rooted in the heart before they began to deal with outward behavior modification. Change the heart and the actions will follow was their Scriptural model (Prv 4:23).

³² Keller, 40.

³³ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 211.

CHAPTER 4

PROGNOSIS

It has been observed that just prior to the 1950s, there was a noticeable lack of interest in the fields of psychology and counseling amongst Christian believers. And as a direct result, most pastoral care and counseling literature at that time was written by a majority of liberal Christians. This is attributed to the idea that conservative Christians of the same era paid little attention to inner matters like that of the soul. Instead, and despite our Puritan and pietist heritage, the majority of past fundamentalist literature, focused on doctrine, prophecy, morality and evangelism.¹ In other words, and if the above notion is true, secular psychology (along with its agnostic and materialistic underpinnings) stepped in to fill the Christian void that was sorely missing. Since the 1950s, evangelicals have become more engaged in psychological and counseling matters and have actively participated in reversing the abovementioned trend and filling the secular void with Scriptural, God-centered counseling alternatives. But, as will be discussed next, there are still remnants of the secular takeover.

Secular Psychology Prognosis

This section will highlight three areas of secular depression prognosis and how those items are practically applied to three areas: an enemy to be eradicated, man's

¹ Eric L. Johnson, ed., *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 29.

sovereignty in medication and how secular psychology relies upon their own best guesses pertaining to depression.

Depression as an Disease to be Eradicated

Secular psychology inaccurately labels depression as an illness or a disease to be eradicated. But this is simply not the case. “For something to be considered an illness there must be evidence of malfunction of or damage to some part of the body’s tissue.”² It should be clarified that depression “is not a disease [but rather] an emotional response to life”³ and while “scientists have been studying depression for several decades, they have not been able to find any hard evidence that proves that depression is a disease or illness. A person’s response to an illness may lead to a depressed state, but depression itself is not an illness.”⁴

Even though it is not technically a true medical disease, secular psychology sells depression as such so the disease can then be targeted for eradication. And “if you want to make people buy a product, you have to convince them that they want or need it [and] to market psychiatric drugs, people have to be convinced that they have ‘diseases’ that can be ‘treated’ with the drugs.”⁵ Therefore, secular psychologists begins with the mindset that depression is something to be destroyed due to its debilitating consequences rather than considering that it may be the body’s or mind way of screaming that something is wrong. What they may be failing to realize is that some depressive suffering may in fact be good and

² Robert Smith, *The Christian Counselor’s Medical Desk Reference* (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 2000), 198.

³ Peter R. Breggin, *The Anti-Depressant Fact Book* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 14.

⁴ Steve Lehrer, "A Biblical Understanding of Depression," *In-Depth Studies*, nd.

⁵ Breggin, 17.

edifying as it was for psychiatrist Viktor Frankl as he described his time in the Nazi death camps in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*: "Suffering is not always a pathological phenomenon... suffering may well be a human achievement, especially if it grows out of existential frustration."⁶

So rather than quickly seeking to cure the depression at its root (heart, sin, irresponsibility, etc.) the way the Puritans did, psychology typically attempts to silence or exorcise the inconvenient and painful symptoms (using anti-depressant medications) instead.

Man's Sovereignty in Medicating Depression

Christians who take an anti-medicine stance when it comes to depression get wrongly labeled as some unenlightened Luddites or as a medieval, anti-science, fundamentalist nut. To dispel this notion, it is therefore recognized that medicine and doctors can and are both common graces from on high and frequently used by God in healing people. And like any true physical disease that produces pain or discomfort, one should logically seek out a cure to end or reduce their immediate anguish and misery. And if a lasting cure cannot be found, medication is often prescribed to suffering individuals.

According to secular psychology, treating depression with drugs should be no different than prescribing medication for physical illness. The problems with this are that: 1) not all depression is biochemical,⁷ 2) depression is not a true medical disease and 3) there is no such thing as anti-depression medication, nor has it ever been proven that medication can cure or decrease the effects of depression. Medical doctor and psychiatrist Peter R. Breggin

⁶ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984), 125.

⁷ Andrew J. Peterson, "Pastoral Counseling: Lesson 5-Anti-Depressant Fact Book" (Lecture, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC, 2008).

has this warning to those considering using popular depression/psychiatric medications such as Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, Celexa, Luvox, BuSpar and Effexor:

Study after study has confirmed that antidepressants typically perform only a little better than sugar pills. In some studies, antidepressants actually turn out to be less effective than the lowly sugar pill... Not only is the sugar pill almost as good as the antidepressant, it is probably much better. First of all, placebo pills don't produce life-threatening illnesses, psychoses, and aggression. Second, these [clinical] trials were paid for, designed, and evaluated by the drug companies themselves.⁸

There were several other secular and religious experts and professionals discovered during the research of this paper who agreed with Doctor Breggin proving that he is not alone in his skepticism and scientific critiques of antidepressant drugs and the lack of evidence for any positive, therapeutic, long-term effectiveness. In fact, these drugs can cause unintended effects such as “brain dysfunction that either blunts the emotions or causes an artificial euphoria... giving temporary relief to some people when they are suffering from depression... but in the long run the drugs do more harm than good.”⁹

Resting on Man's Guesses

Secular therapy is at odds against everything that Puritanism taught: God and His sovereignty, absolute and authoritative truth in the Scriptures, purpose due to being created in the image of God and man's sinful nature. Instead, secular psychologists are the ultimate authorities, peddling their truth, offering their purposes, all while patting their perpetual patients on the heads offering very little but self-indulgence. Without God (atheism), without absolute truth (relativism), without purpose (nihilism) and with the belief in the goodness and ever-evolving ingenuity of man (evolution), secular psychology is left hanging in the balance

⁸ Breggin, 144-145.

⁹ Ibid., 152.

of their own creative best guesses.

Therapists often don't have a clue as to what the real problems are. The moment one dismisses accountability to God and discards His Word, therapists are left to their own subjective guesses as to what a person's root problems are. We could hardly fault the psychologist for not knowing what lies in the heart of his patient were it not for his claims to godlike knowledge.¹⁰

If it is true that “at the heart of therapism is the revolutionary idea that psychology can and should take the place of religion and ethics”¹¹ and that therapists and secular helping professionals are speculating and using mere conjecture when dealing with depression, it might also be possible that they are likewise doing more harm than good to those seeking help.

Secular psychology arrogantly bills itself as authoritative because they have the best research and cures for man's psychological ills. And because they are convinced of their own crowning achievements and pseudoscientific therapies, so are many of their adherents as they too faithfully line up as lab rats ready to partake in psychological guesswork themselves. These authoritative presumptions have duped many people into thinking such things like “self-expression is more important than self-control, that nonjudgmentalism is the essence of kindness, that psychic pain is a pathology in need of a cure...and will loosen when conscientious psychologists correct, rather than promulgate.”¹²

Secular psychology seems to be a myriad of speculations in a patchwork system led by many false teachers. At best, they should be charged with the “making of many books which there is no end creating weariness of the flesh” (paraphrased from Eccl 12:12). At

¹⁰ Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 117.

¹¹ Christina Hoff Sommers and Sally Satel, *One Nation Under Therapy: How the Helping Culture is Eroding Self-Reliance* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005), 216.

worst, the Apostle Paul may have likely accused them of “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.” (2 Tm 3:7).

Even if secular psychology has the best intentions, a willingness to help does not always guarantee a helpful result. Educational psychologist William Kirk Kilpatrick poses this question doubting the competence of psychological helpers:

Even in purely worldly terms there is no certainty that psychological ideas make us any better off. We have tons of expert advice, plus mountains of revelations about the self. Do we step more lightly or laugh more heartily because of it?¹³

Psychology seems to have an ever changing message that can never be pinned down for accountability purposes. This is where the Puritans and their Christian underpinnings radically diverge from secular psychological thought. While the Puritans would agree that individuals were in need of change and constant repentance and reform, they would staunchly stick to the timeless message of their Christian gospel – which never needs updates or alterations... because it totally satisfies and fills all needs. Dr. Kilpatrick goes on to ask some heart-piercing questions that conclude the matter:

Psychologists are forever engaged in building new roads, formulating new concepts, and carrying on more research. The explanation for this is partly scientific curiosity and partly the humanitarian concern for improving our lot – good things of course. But could it also be that this constant jockeying stems from a basic failure – the failure to find a message that really satisfies? Why does psychological insight never seem enough? Why do clients keep showing up for booster shots of analysis as though there were one insight they have missed? Could it be intended that all such efforts to make a personal or social utopia are doomed because this is not the right place for us to settle down?¹⁴

¹² Sommers and Satel, 217.

¹³ William Kirk Kilpatrick, *Psychological Seduction: The Failure of Modern Psychology* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

Puritan Prognosis

This section will highlight three areas of Puritan depression prognosis and how those items are practically applied to three applications about depression as a friend to be embraced, God's sovereignty in allowing it and how their counseling practices rested upon God's promises pertaining to depression.

Depression as a Friend to be Embraced

The Puritans rarely referred to melancholy (depression) in terms of it being an illness or a disease. Instead, they more frequently viewed it as God's discipline from a loving Father towards his son (Heb 12:6). Many of the Psalms speak of a similar sentiment. Ps 119:75 states that, "In faithfulness you have afflicted me." The Puritans believed in a type of severe mercy which demonstrated that God could accomplish good things through depressing affliction and debilitating circumstances. They reasoned from an eternal perspective that affliction tended to strip people of their own self-sufficiency and therefore draws and drives people to Christ by causing them to place their faith, trust and total dependence upon Him.

Dealing with an ongoing, depressed condition can cause one to question God and plead for relief from such pain and anguish. The Apostle Paul's pleas are widely known and often cited as one who begged and pleaded for God's immediate intervention:

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:7-10)

From Paul's own example, there is nothing theologically wrong with asking for

God's healing from terrible personal situations. Knowing this, the Puritans often counseled from the mindset that affliction can humble people and that one can delight in it. They taught that even in the midst of a painful, depressive mindset, one can simultaneously be sorrowful yet rejoicing (2 Cor 6:10) in that they would eventually see God's goodness in their frail, human weakness because it served as a basis for displaying the grace, strength and power of God.

God's Sovereignty in Allowing Depression

Contrary to contemporary Christianity's widespread beliefs that a loving God would never use or allow suffering (or afflictions such as depression) for His glorious good and ultimate purposes, the sovereign God of the Scriptures says otherwise. The Puritans were notorious for their unwavering belief in the sovereignty of God in *all* things and in all decrees as plainly stated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: (Eph 1:11, Rom 11:33, Heb 6:17, Rom 9:15,18) yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, (Jas 1:13,17, 1 Jn 1:5) nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. (Acts 2:23, Mt 17:12, Acts 4:27-28, Jn 19:11, Prv 16:33).¹⁵

It is interesting to note that in Puritan writings, the term "providence" is the more common term that was used to explain how specific matters were sovereignly acted out in a divine manner in people's lives. While they believed that God was and is sovereign over all generally, more specifically they taught that His sovereign plan and design is fulfilled in specific, detailed, and providential events for His ultimate glory. Puritan counseling for the depressed stressed that those afflicted should meditate upon God's providence often because

¹⁵ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Section 3, Chapter 2, 3. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos

“it is the duty of believers to observe all the performances of God’s providence for them, especially when they are in difficulties.”¹⁶

Stemming from their views on God’s sovereignty and providence, the Puritans wholeheartedly believed that all that comes to pass is from the mouth of the Lord (Lam 3:37-38). Their theology of sovereignty did not waver under social pressures of the day to attempt to get God “off the hook” for life’s calamities nor did they adhere to the idea that anything in life was a cosmic accident. Nor did they automatically default to the “devil made me do it” conclusion that affliction was some sort of satanic curse (as many wrongly attribute to the idea that the Puritans seen the devil behind every negative circumstance). Instead, they rightly understood that suffering in general and depression in particular was a result of God’s sovereign purposes and for one’s own sanctification and the building of personal character and that the goal of their counseling was not to “necessarily remove the suffering but rather to grow through suffering [which required] an understanding of God’s providence.”¹⁷

Like Joseph told his bothers about the evil against him, “God meant it for good” (Gn 50:20). So if something like depression happens, God ordains it, and no matter how evil it appears to be at the time, God intends that bad situations will be used for our long-term good as well as His ultimate glory. Puritan Thomas Brooks describes it in his own words this way:

All the afflictions that attend the people of God turn out to their profit and advantage. They are God’s furnace to cleanse and preserve his people. Saints thrive most internally when they are most afflicted. Afflictions lift up the soul to a fuller enjoyment

Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

¹⁶ John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 12-13.

¹⁷ Mark Deckard, *Helpful Truths in Past Places: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 19.

of God... they keep the heart humble and tender... The more saints are beaten with the hammer or affliction, the more they trumpet God's praises. We must measure afflictions by their outcome, not how they hurt.¹⁸

Puritan thought and counsel, like all they did, began and ended with God's sovereign rule. All Puritan doctrine and beliefs hinged on this foundational, theological premise. One is hard-pressed to find Puritan writings that beg for God to lighten their burdens, but instead they resorted to asking God to make their backs stronger.¹⁹ Unlike many believers today, the Puritans were unashamed and thoroughly convinced that God controlled both good and bad: "I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things" (Is 45:7). They also rightly understood that God has an overall purpose for every sparrow that falls (Mt 10:29), every city that falls (Am 3:6) and for everything and therefore, they counseled, lived and relied upon this comforting Scriptural, time-tested truth: "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose'" (Is 46:9-10).

With this being said, it must also be mentioned that God's reasons for allowing afflictive depression vary from person to person. For some it may be to better learn and meditate upon the Word: "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes" (Ps 119:71). For others it could be that they experience depressive seasons in order to minister to others in a similar state of mind: "so that we may be able to comfort those who

¹⁸ Thomas Brooks, *Works of Thomas Brooks* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), Volume 1: 47-54.

¹⁹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Sword and Trowel: 1877* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 2009), 7.

are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor 1:4). And for many, depressive suffering tests and reveals their level of faith and trust in that, “while all things are quiet and comfortable, we live by sense rather than faith. But the worth of a soldier is never known in times of peace.”²⁰

Resting on God’s Promises

The depressed do not always have the words to describe or explain their own condition. God understands that. That is one of the reasons the Psalms exist. They are a collection of individuals plainly speaking and crying out to God. They often come in the forms of raw emotion, deep passion and agonizing anguish. If those who are depressed can read through the Psalms, they could likely see themselves in the writings and use them as a springboard for their own conversations with God. He knows us best and will give us the words to say which begins the process of breaking down the walls of sadness and gloom that surround the downcast.

For the most part, Puritans pastors and leaders are mischaracterized as unhappy, dismal, somber and stoic churchmen with nothing to offer the depressed individual, but nothing could be further from the truth. They knew better than most that the Holy Scriptures taught that all agonies in this life were precursors to birthing an eventual and perfected eternal joy in Christ the Lord. Yes, the Puritans were academic theologians who were extremely well-versed in the Scriptures and therefore systematically referred to the Bible in their writings and counseling practices, but this fact should bring credibility rather than pejorative, joyless connotations. Puritan pastor Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) often reminded

²⁰ Thomas Manton, *The Life of Faith: A Puritan's View of Christian Challenges* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1997), 174.

the depressed and afflicted of God's Word and His promises as constant reminders for their hearers to refocus their heart and minds upon God's character rather than their dire circumstances. Here is an abbreviated compilation of Brooks' counsel to those who do not have joy nor rejoice in Christ as they once did and now find themselves doubting God's power and forgetting His promises:

God will restore and make up the comforts of his people. Though thy candle be put out, yet God will light it again, and make it burn more bright than ever. Though thy sun for the present be clouded, yet he that rides upon the clouds shall scatter those clouds, and cause the sun to shine and warm thy heart as in former days, as the psalmist speaks: 'Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side' (Ps 71:20, 21). God takes away a little comfort, that he may make room in the soul for a greater degree of comfort. This the prophet Isaiah sweetly shows: 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners' (Is 57:18). Bear up sweetly, O precious soul! thy storm shall end in a calm, and thy dark night in a sunshine day; thy mourning shall be turned into rejoicing, and the waters of consolation shall be sweeter and higher in thy soul than ever; the mercy is surely thine, but the time of giving it is the Lord's. Wait but a little, and thou shalt find the Lord comforting thee on every side.²¹

As one can plainly tell from this snippet and other cursory reading of Puritan sermons, they were personally bathed in the Holy Writ and were tireless in harkening God's promises to their counselees in an attempt to banish all discouragement while resting in the assurance of God's faithfulness to deliver them from their dismal state. In a similar vein, Martin Luther's wife, Katherine, used an equally effective yet alternative method to forcefully remind her husband that God is very much alive, well and in control. The greatly discouraged, and often depressed sixteenth century reformer Martin Luther (who frequently referred to his own depression as *Anfechtung* which means "something to be fought at"²² and

²¹ Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 170.

²² Edward T. Welch, *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch

has also been defined as “all the doubt, turmoil, pang, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of man”²³) was himself in need of constant reminders of the faithful promises and certainty of God’s presence in his suffering:

Seeing him unresponsive to any word of encouragement, one morning she appeared dressed in black mourning clothes. No word of explanation was forthcoming, and so Luther, who had heard nothing of a bereavement, asked her, “Katharine, why are you dressed in mourning black?” “Someone has died,” she replied. “Died?” said Luther. “I have not heard of anyone dying. Whoever can have died?” “It seems,” his wife replied, “that God must have died!”²⁴

Stark, no-nonsense, hard-hitting reminders, much like this, of God’s reign and sovereignty in the midst of life’s afflictions are common ways that the Puritans implemented to awaken a depressed Christian who is believing and behaving as if God is dead, powerless or uncaring.

While the Puritans were well-known for their outspokenness and straight to the point, plain talk, it needs to be mentioned that they also knew their audience well. They were not hard and crass sounding with all of their counselees as often wrongly characterized. “The Puritans amazingly were tender, encouraging, always calling the counselors to accept the grace of God, and extremely careful not to call a problem ‘sin’ unless it was analyzed carefully.”²⁵ In other words, and contrary to the negative stereotypes of their counseling methods, the Puritans instructed others, and often exhibited themselves a gentle, shepherd-like quality towards those in the midst of depression while modeling and coming alongside

Press, 2004), 97.

²³ Ronald Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), 42.

²⁴ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Deserted by God* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 16.

²⁵ Timothy J. Keller, "Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 3 (1988), 40.

the hurting so that their burdens were carried and understood in certain situations. Puritan compassion and Christian love for the brotherhood was common as they recognized that depression cannot and should not ever be battled alone in isolation:

As much as you can, divert them from the thoughts which are their trouble; keep them on some other talks and business; break in upon them, and interrupt their usings; rouse them out of it, but with loving importunity; suffer them not to be long alone; get fit company to them, or them to it; especially, suffer them not to be idle, but drive or draw them to some pleasing works which may stir the body, and employ the thoughts. If they are addicted to reading, let it not be too long, nor any books that are unfit for them; and rather let another read to them than themselves. Often set before them the great truths of the gospel which are fittest to comfort them; and read them informing, comforting books; and live in a loving, cheerful manner with them.²⁶

²⁶ Baxter, Richard, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: Volume XVII*, ed. William Orme, *The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith and Physic* (London: Paternoster, 1830), 275.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

“In darkness, God’s truth shines the most clear.”¹ Depression is a sanctifying affliction in that God often reveals His greatest treasures to suffering people in the midst of a deep darkness. This fact is powerfully illustrated in the beautiful Puritan prayer entitled, *The Valley of Vision*:

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory. Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision. Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine; let me find Thy light in my darkness, Thy life in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley.²

Likened to a gloomy valley of no escape, depression by its very nature, leads its victims to believe that it is a hopeless, inescapable disease. It is also an isolating affliction that pushes others away since they could not possibly know or understand what a depressed individual is going through or feeling.

In our contemporary context, especially among the “young, restless and reformed”³ movement that is fashionable today, it is common to overly romanticize or idolize

¹ Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2006), 210.

² Arthur Bennett, ed., *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), xxiv-xxv.

³ Collin Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008).

the 'good-old-days' by postulating that things were far better than they actually were. The Puritan movement is no different in that they too were not perfect men and often made their share of mistakes.⁴ Like any past religious movement and its corresponding leaders, including events associated with the Reformation period (which is largely en vogue at the time of this assignment), it is often overemphasized as an *ad hominem* argument to favorably confuse historical descriptions with authoritative, prescriptive doctrines for all to follow.

John Frame warns against this when he writes,

Often a writer will pose a theological problem and then try to resolve it, not by exegeting Scripture but by describing various historical responses to it. One sometimes gets the impression in some circles that we are to resolve theological issues by counting noses among the Puritans!⁵

In other words, the Puritans were not great men and great counselors because of the great historical legacy they left for their church (as great as that legacy is). They were great because of their rock-solid faith in Christ alone and His authoritative teachings contained within the infallible, inerrant Scriptures. And if they were still alive and able to speak for themselves, the Puritans would likely be the first to admit that they were not perfect by any means. And much can be learned from negative examples⁶ from Puritan faults and shortcomings. As many contemporary authors from both within the church as well as from the outside will attest as they relish seizing upon every opportunity to shed poor light on the Puritans and their lifestyle and beliefs. Sometimes this criticism is truthful and warranted and at other times it is mere myth or fabrication.

⁴ Thomas N. Smith, "The Perils of Puritanism," *Reformation & Revival* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1995), 83-99.

⁵ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 312.

⁶ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, MI:

But if anyone would take honest time and sincere effort to fairly read their writings and study their history, they would be hard pressed to disagree with this overall conclusion: Better than most historic and contemporary people groups, the Puritans knew how navigate the valleys of life and taught others how to suffer and die well. They welcomed their personal valleys as a means of grace, sanctification and ultimately used it for their and God's glorification. This was not only due to their firsthand experience but more so to their total reliance upon God and His absolute sovereignty over all of creation.

This paper began by documenting the time-tested, Biblical principles applied by the Puritans for the diagnosis and cure of depression. Compared and contrasted with secular psychology, it was shown that modern methods are baseless, lacking and insufficient in dealing with depression at its root. As this paper comes to a close, it is with great hope that at least three new perspectives as bottom-line takeaways that encapsulate and summarize Puritan counseling methods:

First, compared to the short-term, pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps, behave yourself out of the doldrums, self-help methods incorporated by secular psychology, the Puritans offer true and lasting hope for those suffering from depression. There are no quick fixes in the Puritan theology of counseling. And if sanctifying affliction was sent from the loving and sovereign hand of the Heavenly Father as the Puritans taught and believed, then it was likewise apparent that no quick fix is available until God deems otherwise and His purposes have been fulfilled.

Second, the Puritans counseled by establishing a Biblical perspective with a hope-filled eternity in mind. "Our perspective on what is happening is vital to our sense of hope...

Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 187-202.

so much depression arises because of a loss of perspective.”⁷ They assured their afflicted hearers that if one only had hope in the here and now of their present depressed condition, that they should be pitied (1 Cor 15:19). But rather their outlook should be anchored in the rejoicing hope of the glory of God (Rom 5:2).

Some Christians feel guilt, shame or regard themselves as spiritual failures because they harbor the belief that is wrong for believers to be sad, disappointed or depressed. Since today’s churches rarely speak, preach or pray openly about depression in the life of believers, many take Paul’s words, “rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil 4:4) as their stand-alone text to mean that one always needs to be happy and smiling. But as we know, it is unwise and dangerous to build a foundational theology on the back of one, isolated text. It must be remembered that the Scriptures also teach that it is alright to weep and grieve (Eccl 3:4) and that one should be “sorrowful yet always rejoicing” (2 Cor 6:10), and that both feelings can and do simultaneously and legitimately exist in the life of the believer who has joy as well as hope in the Lord while in the midst of sorrow.

The Puritans were well-known for their staunch counseling stance that advised their hearers that grief, sorrow and depression should never be prolonged and exacerbated into a sinful hopelessness, but instead they should “not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess 4:13). They reiterated a 3-point, sound, Biblical counsel from the apostle Peter (1 Pt 1:3-9) which stated that 1) depression is a God-ordained testing that displays the “genuineness of your faith” and that, 2) one should not be “grieved by various trials” and above all, 3) remember that sanctifying result of depression will eventually “result in praise

⁷ Richard Winter, *The Roots of Sorrow: Reflections on Depression and Hope* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1986), 292.

and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Because as long as one does not lose hope in their standing with the resurrected Christ, there is light at the end of the long, dark tunnel known as depression. “Never forget. Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things. And no good thing ever dies.”⁸

Third, a common Puritan counseling trait was their ability to not only offer hope for lasting change but also included complete healing with and through the Scriptural promises via the gospel. How people change and grow is described in 2 Cor 3:18. The gospel of Jesus Christ is totally sufficient and contains all that is needed for Godly living and counseling (2 Pt 1:2-4). Furthermore, 2 Tm 3:16-17 offers four things in one’s counseling philosophy that can be profited from: teaching (what is right), reproof (what is wrong), correction, (how to make the wrong right, and training in righteousness (how to keep it right).⁹

The Puritans faithfully counseled the depressed by restating the obvious in applying the ultimate spiritual remedy of gospel truths. They were not only passionate about sharing the gospel with those they counseled. But they were equally passionate in meditating about the gospel and applying it as they allowed it to personally influence the way they lived and worked. When it came to depression, they knew that the “better [the] grasp of Scripture and of the gospel of God’s grace, the greater will be [the] capacity to deal with inner pain.”¹⁰

And as the foundational premise of the Christian gospel, the Puritans knew that

⁸ As cited in the 1994 movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*. Joni Eareckson Tada, *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 192.

⁹ Ben Neff, "Counseling Philosophy: Biblical Counseling vs. Psychology," *Christ-Centered Counseling*, nd.

¹⁰ John White, *The Masks of Melancholy: A Christian Physician Looks at Depression &*

one must first begin with a deep sorrow of their sin, separation and utter bankruptcy due to being “poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungering and thirsting for righteousness” (Mt 5:3-6). This kind of desperation cries out in a grief-stricken repentance to be delivered (not only from their immediate depression) and be eternally reconciled to God. John Piper writes that in such darkness, one should always go to God in despair:

Despair of finding any answer in yourself. I pray that you will cease from all efforts to look inside yourself for the rescue you need. I pray that you will do what only desperate people can do, namely, cast yourself on Christ. May you say to him, “You are my only hope. I have no righteousness in myself. I am overwhelmed with sin and guilt. I am under the wrath of God. My own conscience condemns me, and makes me miserable. I am perishing. Darkness is all about me. Have mercy upon me. I trust you.”¹¹

The Puritans “believed that with the Bible rightly applied one could take a person successfully through the process of sanctification in a way that pleases God and brings peace to the soul”¹² and stressed this Biblical mindset in all of their dealings with the afflicted and depressed. They knew that an initial act of faith would be the first step in being united with Jesus Christ and His saving power. “Whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (Jn 6:37). This is the gospel. And because the Puritans knew it and its power, they were not ashamed to live it and proclaim it in all they did – including the counseling of the depressed. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith” (Rom 1:16-17).

Suicide (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 52-53.

¹¹ John Piper, *When the Darkness Will Not Lift* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 21.

¹² Howard Eyrich and William Hines, *Curing the Heart: A Model for Biblical Counseling* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 11.

CHAPTER 6

AFTERWARDS

Five years have now passed since the painful, life-altering news. Being told that he was depressed and therefore disqualified for ministry was the fateful verdict that he kept playing over and over in his head. If being diagnosed with depression was not enough, added to that were the demolished aspirations of any and all future ministry-related work. He became withdrawn, confused, hurt, and full of shame. As a result, his depression deepened and the darkness ensued.

His family and friends did not know why he was isolating himself more and more. Nor did he ever divulge his depression to them. Many of the things that he once enjoyed now seemed meaningless as complete lethargy took over. While it was difficult for him to pray under these circumstances, he never became bitter nor did he angrily lash out nor demanded an explanation from God as to why something like this was happening. He did what came natural to him: he read multiple tomes of hope-filled literature.

One day, he removed a book from his shelf that he had owned for years but never bothered to have read it. It was a small, devotional book entitled, *The Valley of Vision* which was a collection of prayers from the Puritans. Before he fell asleep each night, he read these simple-yet-profound prayers, claiming them as his own, memorizing and meditating upon the promises within. From this intriguing book, a small spark was ignited as he sought out and read other Puritan sermons and publications.

These 15th/16th century men began to speak comfort and consolation to him as if they were standing and watching over his shoulder mentoring him. Their truth-piercing,

grace-filled writings unashamedly described a high, exalted view of a sovereign, loving God that he had never experienced before in his Christian life. These Puritans exuded an unwavering joy and peace that made him envious of their enduring faith in the midst of their own afflictions. Bit by bit, and day by day, he was incrementally beginning to feel alive again and motivated to formally explore these men, their writings and what made them tick.

Impressed with the doctrines and practices of the Puritans, yet still apprehensive from his last dreadful seminary experience, he decided to enroll in a seminary known for the same Reformed brand of faith that the Puritans themselves adhered to. His goal was not necessarily to gain a degree, but to study under Godly, like-minded professors who understood and could explain Puritan thought and their God-centered theology in a greater and wider context.

With each passing course, he was edified and highly encouraged. While the content of each course was not specifically Puritan-related, the core themes of an authoritative, sovereign God, a glorious Christ and the infallible Scriptures (traits that were central to Puritan thought), the darkness began to slowly dissipate. One year passed, and then another came and went as well. And his depression finally lifted. He now has hope. Looking back at this devastating experience, he is now thankful beyond explanation for all of the past trials of his depression and would not change one thing about the painful ordeal. Reading the Puritans taught him to be grateful in this way:

Resolve to spend most of your time in thanksgiving and praising God. If you cannot do it with the joy that you should, yet do it as you can... Doing it as you can is the way to be able to do it better. Thanksgiving stirreth up thankfulness in the heart.¹

¹ Baxter, Richard, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: Volume XVII*, ed. William Orme, *The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith and Physic* (London: Paternoster, 1830), 272.

Today, he continues to be overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God. He would have never imagined that God would teach him gratitude and patience in the midst of suffering by first crushing him down to nothing... and slowly building him back up into the image of Christ as he now longs to be used by God for His glorious purposes. He is desirous to not sit idly back and foolishly waste his depression experience. He is convinced that it was sent directly from God and will eventually be used for his sanctification and His glory. He has recommitted himself to God and reengaged with his family and ready to live again. He is one course shy of graduating from seminary and is considering using his depression experience, and admiration for the Puritans as a thesis topic. Lord willing, he wants to pursue further graduate education in the area of Biblical counseling as an attempt to minister to others who are hurt and depressed.

While specific future ministry plans and God-ordained calling are unknown at this point in time, he is certain of these two concluding facts: First, the Bible-saturated, God-exalting writings of Puritans have been significantly instrumental in creating a hope-filled devotion for the Scriptures, a love for God, and an empathetic ear for others. And second, that the Puritan answer to his depression consisted of Christ-centered, God-exalting, purposeful labor for His kingdom glory, along with the importance of being devoted to a caring group of his family and friends who now understand his condition and love him anyway. Counsel from Puritan Richard Baxter has been personally applied:

Be sure that you live not idly, but in some constant business of a lawful calling, so far as you have bodily strength. Idleness is a constant sin, and labour is a duty. Idleness is but the devil's home for temptation, and for unprofitable, distracting musings. Labour profiteth others, and ourselves: both soul and body need it. Six days must you labour, and must not eat the bread of idleness. God hath made it our duty, and will bless us in his appointed way. I have known grievous, despairing melancholy cured, and turned into a life of godly cheerfulness, principally by setting upon constancy and diligence in the business of *families* and *callings*. It turns the thoughts from temptations, and leaveth

the devil no opportunity: it pleaseth God if done in obedience, and it purifieth the distempered blood. Though thousands of poor people that live in penury, and have wives and children that must also feel it, one would think should be distracted with griefs and cares, yet few of them fall into the disease of melancholy, because labour keepeth the body sound, and leaveth them no leisure for melancholy musings.²

² Ibid., 273.

APPENDIX 1

KEY DATES IN PURITAN HISTORY

- 1559–Act of Uniformity requires use of Book of Common Prayer for public worship
- 1564–The term “Puritan” occurs for the first time
- 1567–Controversy over clerical vestments causes Puritans' desire for further reformation
- 1569–Thomas Cartwright of Cambridge outlines the Puritan program
- 1570–Puritan leader Thomas Cartwright deprived of teaching post at Cambridge for criticizing Anglican liturgy and government
- 1593–Puritan assemblies and activities outlawed
- 1600–William Bridge born (died 1670)
- 1603–James I becomes King
- 1604–The Puritans meet James at Hampton Court. Their hopes are dashed as James I rejects most requests for reform
- 1608–Thomas Brooks born (died 1680)
- 1616–Richard Baxter born (died 1691)
- 1620–Plymouth, Massachusetts colony founded by Pilgrims (Puritan Separatists) who had earlier fled to the Netherlands for religious freedom
- 1625–Charles I becomes King. He too is against the Puritans
- 1628–William Laud becomes Bishop of London and steps up oppression of the Puritans
- 1630–John Winthrop and many Puritans migrate to America
- 1636–Harvard founded by Puritans
- 1649–William Bridge published *A Lifting Up for the Downcast*
- 1652–Thomas Brooks published *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*

1658–Timothy Rogers born (died 1728)

1662–New Act of Uniformity over two thousand Puritan pastors resign or forced out

1665–Five Mile Act forbids nonconformists from coming within five miles of former parishes or corporate towns

1673–Richard Baxter published *The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow*

1685–Charles's Catholic brother James II takes throne; persecution of nonconformists intensifies

1688–William & Mary take the throne. Puritans free to preach and establish churches

1689–Puritans regain freedom of worship through Act of Toleration

1691–Timothy Rogers published *Trouble of Mind and the Disease of Melancholy*^{1 2 3}

¹ Clay McKinney, "Church History Timeline: The Puritans 1600-1699," *The Church History Timeline*, 1998-2009.

² *Christian History*, "The English Puritans: Christian History Timeline", Issue 89, 2006.

³ Randall C. Gleason and Kelly M. Kopic, "Who Were the Puritans?" in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, ed. Kopic, Kelly M. and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 11-12.

APPENDIX 2

KEY DATES IN SECULAR PSYCHOLOGY HISTORY

1653–The term “psychologie” was used for the first time in the Vack Discourse.

1856–Sigmund Freud born (died 1939)

1875–Carl Jung born (died 1961)

1882–Viennese physician Joseph Brever uses hypnosis to treat hysteria (beginning of psychoanalysis)

1902–Carl Rogers born (died 1987)

1904–B. F. Skinner born (died 1990)

1909–Sigmund Freud lectured in the U.S. on Psychoanalysis¹

¹ Steven C. Kettlet, *Biblical Counsel: Resources for Renewal-An Annotated Topical Bibliography of Works Containing Biblical Counsel for Persons Seeking Lasting Solutions to Life's Problems* (Newark, DE: Letterman Associates, 1993), 676.

APPENDIX 3

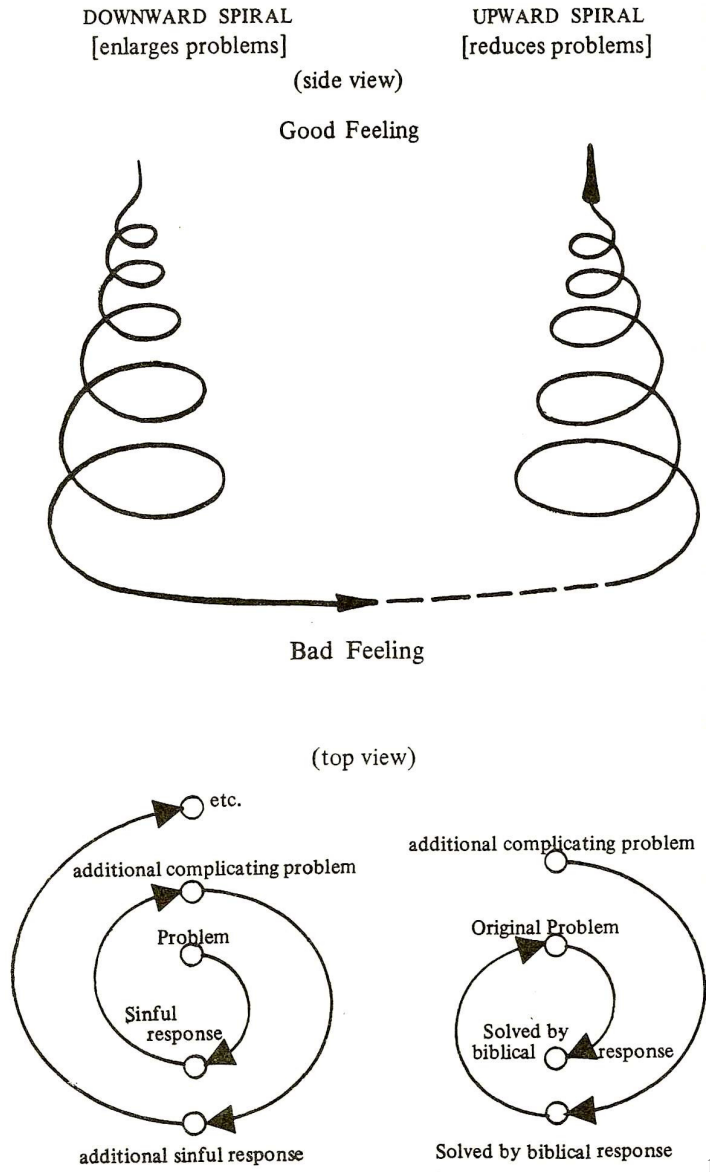
DEPRESSION COUNSELING OUTLINE

- I. The counselee must recognize his responsibility for depression.
 - A. From time to time all of us get down (2 Cor 4:8).
 1. But this is not depression.
 2. Depression is ceasing to function in our daily chores and interests (giving up on responsibilities).
 - B. When we get down we do not need to be out.
 - C. Depression is when one is both down and out.
- II. Depression results from handling a down period sinfully.
 - A. We get down (blue, discouraged, etc.) from both sinful causes (guilt) and non-sinful causes (sickness, financial reverses, etc.).
 - B. But when we give in to down feelings
 1. We let chores and interests slide;
 2. We then feel even less like doing them and brood instead,
 3. Thus increasing our guilt from failure to achieve,
 4. And this makes us feel less like doing things, and we spiral downward into a depression.
- III. Counselees may spiral up out of depression
 - A. By asking God's forgiveness;
 - B. By doing chores and assuming responsibilities;
 - C. And by similarly dealing with any other matter of guilt.
- IV. Counselees can stay out of depression
 - A. By following God's commands when down, rather than following their feelings'
 - B. By carefully scheduling and following the schedule no matter how they feel;
 - C. By avoiding pity parties and refusing to engage in brooding'
 - D. By repenting of any sin immediately;
 - E. By immediately straightening out any relationship to God or man that goes sour;
 - F. And by changing all erroneous vocabulary (by which they convince themselves that "things are hopeless" or "I can't take it any more," etc.).¹

¹ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's New Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1977), 721.

APPENDIX 4

SPIRALS AND RESPONSES



¹ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), 376.

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