HABITS AND THE HEART:
RECLAIMING HABITUATION'S PLACE IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING

by

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ABSTRACT
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by Brian A. Mesimer

Among the many fault lines in the biblical counseling movement, one flashpoint has been forgotten: the debate over Jay Adams' doctrine of habituation. According to Adams, this key component of sanctification requires the believer to continually and physically practice righteousness in order for that practice to become solidified in their spiritual life. Although Adams claims to find biblical support for habituation, subsequent generations of biblical counselors have been unwilling to fully endorse it, largely due to Adams' own unconvincing justification. Seeing the doctrine as a curious oddity at best or, at worst, a direct integration of the modified behaviorism of Mowrer and Glasser, the newer generation critiqued Adams' lack of emphasis on motivation and the heart. While such a correction was needed, newer generations of biblical counselors would do well to revisit the theory, for it exudes a biblical profundity that far exceeds Adams' initial conceptions. Through an exposition of the doctrine and an examination of the surrounding debate, this thesis will argue for a renewed understanding of habituation that is grounded properly in biblical theology. Utilizing the biblical theology of Dru Johnson, a firmer biblical foundation for habituation will be couched in a construction of sanctification as a process grounded in a the primacy of the heart and requiring both cognitive change and embodied physical habituation. When seen as such, the doctrine shows promise for affecting conciliation in the counseling wars.
To my wife and to all other counselors whom God has given to me.
"The body is the way to the heart."
—James K. A. Smith

"Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."
—Aristotle

"If not by a process of habituation, how does sin in the body, in the flesh and in the members come about?"
—Jay E. Adams
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CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM WITH HABITS

Introduction

The development of doctrine is rarely linear. More often, doctrinal development follows a circuitous path, vacillating between different perspectives and inhabiting divergent worldviews before coming to rest in a more settled form. Thinkers like Hegel anticipated these kinds of processes, and his dialectical theory can be helpful in understanding how a doctrine progresses. The original thesis is opposed by its antithesis, and the two are finally united in a synthesis supposedly superior to previous iterations. An example of this kind of process can be found in the history of the doctrine of the Eucharist, where the thesis is transubstantiation, the antithesis is symbolical Zwinglianism, and the synthesis is the Reformed doctrine of the spiritual presence.

Sometimes doctrines regress into such an estate that they must be thrown out wholesale. Thomas Kuhn's view of scientific revolutions prefigures this kind of revolutionary development in the scientific world. When a theory becomes untenable, such as Newtonian physics, it must be replaced with a revolutionary new idea, which in this case was the theory of relativity. One finds evidence of this in the Reformation itself, where Catholic sacerdotalism was rejected outright in favor of a renewed emphasis on the preached word.

The difficulty lies in knowing which corrective measure is indicated when one interacts with deficient doctrine. Should one simply move towards the mean of two opposing
positions or should one raze the superstructure and start from scratch? This is precisely the question posed to practitioners of biblical counseling who wish to interact with Jay Adams' doctrine of habit. Perhaps the most controversial figure in Christian counseling history, Adams has been compared favorably with Luther while being widely rejected by others. Regardless of one's opinion of Adams, it was his own kind who rejected much of his work towards the end of his public ministry. This rejection was documented in the literature of the time and coincided with tectonic shifts in the superstructure of the biblical counseling movement.

Unknown to many, Adams theory of counseling relied heavily on interventions dictating the development of embodied habit as a means of achieving sanctification. Although seemingly a common-sense conclusion, the doctrine created dissonance between Adams' methodology and his stated position of biblical sufficiency. Adams was aware of this and attempted to vigorously defend his doctrine using biblical exegesis.

Newer generations of biblical counselors remained unconvinced. To many, Adams' position appeared to be a translation of popular behavioral interventions influential to him in his training. More importantly, Adams' exegesis appeared bankrupt and led to idiosyncratic positions on the nature of sin and the flesh. Concerned that Adams' view of habituation was untenable, this newer generation developed fresh emphases on motivation and the heart to guide their counseling. No doubt they were apprehensive to avoid the rote behaviorism and the legalistic practices that Adams' appeared to be advocating. They may have been less


2 For simplicity's sake, those who sought to advance the movement beyond Adams' initial work will be referred to as the newer generation(s).
aware that in so doing, they instigated a cognitive revolution in biblical counseling that drastically changed the face of the movement.

For this newer generation never returned to rebuild the doctrine of habituation that they rejected, alleging that Adams had gotten his cart before the horse. In order to create obedience, they claimed, one must first motivate the heart towards good behavior.\(^3\) This is a robustly biblical idea, but the newer generation would go on to primarily emphasize cognitive interventions as the way to achieve heart change.\(^4\) An examination of modern biblical counseling literature confirms this cognitive orientation. Yet no one has stopped to ask the question of whether habit and embodied processes still have a place in biblical counseling. To put it succinctly: what if the body can influence the heart?\(^5\)

In so doing, the newer generation completed a Kuhnian revolution by preferring cognitive interventions over Adams’ embodied ones.\(^6\) What was needed was a synthesis of interventions focused on both the mind and the body. Such a synthesis would represent a balanced approach to counseling and would therefore be more in concordance with biblical

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\(^4\) This means word and Word based interventions—using scripture to correct, meditating upon the Word, or the garden variety of cognitive disputation, processing, and discussion that usually occurs in counseling sessions.


\(^6\) Most of the instigators of this revolution deny that it is a revolution, but a continuation of Adams’ work; see Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 74-75 and Powlison, *Biblical Counseling*, 244.
understandings of the human person. The principle barrier to such a synthesis, however, is the lack of quality biblical support for habituation.\(^7\) This thesis exists to fill that gap.

One way forward in defense of habituation is to examine its common grace roots. Habit has been preached as a doctrine of secular improvement from Aristotle to Skinner, and therefore has much attestation outside of special revelation. This would be a compelling avenue of research if Scripture did not offer a better way forward. This way can be accessed through a renewed emphasis on a biblical theology of knowing, as most recently demonstrated in the work of Hebraic scholar Dru Johnson. Although Johnson's work focuses on epistemology, his conclusion is that embodied actions contribute a great deal to the knowing process.\(^8\) Thusly, a religious proposition can be believed in the heart, but when the knower enacts that proposition ritually or repetitively, they begin to understand it at a higher level. Such processes of knowing are never explicitly stated in Scripture, but implied by their copious presence in the Bible, which closely resemble habit.

Being established in Scripture, habit becomes a requisite part counseling without which one cannot seriously expect success in biblical counseling. Indeed, habit becomes the handmaiden of change, working God's truth deep into the heart of the believer. Some examples of how this can be practically applied in counseling sessions and treatment plans will be offered.


When habit regains its rightful place in the arsenal of biblical counseling interventions, at least two things will be accomplished. First, a necessary corrective will be issued to newer generations of biblical counselors who have disconnected their counseling from the whole person. Such a reintegration of habit into their own practices can only improve them by aligning their ministries more closely with a biblical anthropology. Second, new avenues of rapprochement with integrationists will be opened around a renewed emphasis on habitual practices. Integrationists have long been comfortable combining biblical interventions with those of behaviorism, and perhaps this fusion has been closer to the truth than most biblical counselors are willing to admit. Likewise, perhaps integrationists are unaware that Scripture alone already contains that for which they are searching.

**Literature Review**

The primary source in understanding where Adams began with his doctrine of habituation is his own copious works—over 100 books! This presents an immediate complication, for it is difficult to collect everything Adams has written about habit in one place. Furthering this is the fact that Adams had little interest in systematizing or indexing his own work. If comparisons of Adams to Luther are true, one can rightly bewail the absence of Adams’ own Melanchthon. Yet Adams’ principle teachings on habit can be found in a just a few places: his groundbreaking *Competent to Counsel* (1970), his follow up *Christian Counselor's Manual* (1973), and *More Than Redemption* (1979). Other works, including pamphlets and tracts, are instructive as well.

Rebuttals to Adams' doctrine of habit appeared mainly over the course of one year in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*. Just over thirty years after *Competent to Counsel*, Ed
Welch (2002) took Adams to task for appearing to define sin as an attribute of the body, which was closely related to Adams' justification for habituation. Two issues later, George Schwab (2003) launched a damning critique of Adams' doctrine of habituation, alleging that it represented an integration of secular psychology fueled by poor exegesis. This article retains its value due to its reconstruction of Adams' doctrine of habit in one place. It also helped to launch a revolution in the biblical counseling movement, as documented in Lambert's *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (2011), Powlison's *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (2010), Jeremy Pierre's *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life* (2016), Paul David Tripp's *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* (2002), and Garrett Higbee's contribution to *Counseling the Hard Cases* (2012).

Secular sources are not silent on the matter. A few works worth considering are Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (349 BC) and American journalist David Brooks' *Social Animal* (2011). Recent Christian thinkers have also tried to reconstruct doctrines of habit, including James K. A. Smith's *You Are What You Love* (2016). Smith comes close to offering an orthodox theory of habit, but fails to ground his conclusions with biblical justifications.

One attempt to create a biblical doctrine of habit can be reconstructed from Dru Johnson's work, and specifically from his monographs *Knowledge by Ritual* (2016) and *Scripture's Knowing* (2015). Borrowing loosely from Michael Polyani, Johnson identifies an embodied part of knowing that is essential to the sanctification process. Johnson relies on ritual theorist Catherine Bell's *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (2009) in this regard.

Finally, evidence will be presented to demonstrate that integrationists and biblical counselors can actually find common ground on the issue of habituation. Landmark
integrationist works such as Crabb's *Effective Biblical Counseling* (1977), Stanton and Butman's *Modern Psychotherapies* (1994), and McMinn and Campbell's *Integrative Psychotherapy* (2007), demonstrate how integrationists rightly and wrongly use habituation.
CHAPTER 2
ADAMS' DOCTRINE OF HABITUATION

Introduction

Like most technical terms, 'habit' is in need of constant redefinition. Many definitions have been offered. Three hundred years before our Lord, Aristotle was able to define habit as something akin to "patterns of action, acquired by training that uses pleasure and pain as incentives."¹ In Greek, ἕξις meant "use, practice,"² as in Hebrews 5.14.³ Modern society seems to have made its own bad habit of using the term in any way it pleases, referring to recovering addicts as "kicking the habit" while describing a foible as a "bad habit."

Each of these definitions contains merit, yet the most relevant understanding to the biblical counseling movement is that of Jay E. Adams. Initially taken at face value during the movement's inception, Adams' doctrine of habituation became increasingly controversial as it aged, eventually being rejected as unbiblical by newer generations. Currently, the doctrine receives little attention, although it still holds great promise were it to be reexamined. The first task in resurrecting Adams' doctrine of habituation is to accurately understand what he


³ "But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained through constant practice to distinguish good from evil." All citations are from the English Standard Version, Crossway, 2001 unless otherwise noted. Emphasis mine.
initially meant by the term. Such an exploration will require grasping Adams' definition, tracing the roots of the doctrine, and reconstructing how it was used in practice.

**Adams' Definition of Habit**

Adams' basic definition of habit is presented succinctly in *Competent to Counsel*. It is "regular, consistent practice." This is not revolutionary, nor is his addition that habit involves "constant repetition." He says more in *More Than Redemption*, documenting habit as "the capacity to learn to respond unconsciously, automatically and comfortably." Habit "enables human beings to act without conscious decision in a variety of circumstances, so that they may put their minds to other matters instead of focusing on hundreds of humdrum minutiae." Habit, therefore, contains two components. First, there is a repetitive practice of a desired action. This will be called H1. Second, through this repetitive practice, the action becomes ingrained to the point that the agent no longer has to think about what they are doing to produce the desired result. As is typical, Adams is more succinct: "whenever one does something long enough, it becomes part of him." This is a more complex state of affairs which will be called H2, although Adams frequently uses the term "patterns" to designate this state of affairs.

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5 Ibid., 163.
7 Ibid.
It must be admitted that Adams is unclear on this point. He not only has confounded habit with pattern but has also excluded a middle term. It is traditional to think of habit as simply a practice that one intentionally does (H1). The state of unconsciously engaging in a desired practice appears to go beyond this definition to describe a mode of being (H2). How did such a transformation take place? It must be recognized that some sort of process exists between the two points. The process of constantly and intentionally engaging in a practice in order for it to become a pattern should be called habituation, which shall be called H3.10

More specifically, habituation contains two components: dehabituation and rehabituation, corresponding to Pauline language regarding "putting on" and "putting off".11 Simply put, a sinner dehabituates his bad practices by intentionally trying to stop them and becomes rehabilitated when he intentionally practices good things. Adams notes that it is not enough for bad habits to simply cease; rather, there must be a character change.12

George Schwab accurately characterizes this aspect of Adams' doctrine:

Change begins with becoming aware of one's bad responses to stimuli and desiring new . . . responses. Then the environment must be rearranged in order to reinforce the desired one. Next, a person must consciously unlearn old responses and relearn new ones, with the help of other involved people and of the Holy Spirit.13

Thusly, four steps in this process are acknowledged. First, there is a motivational piece wherein the agent becomes aware of the need to change desires to do so. Second, an


12 "A thief is still a thief if he only has stopped stealing. He is simply a thief who at the moment is not stealing . . . But if after repentance he gets a job, works hard at earning his money honesty, and learns the blessings of giving, he is no longer a thief . . . He becomes dehabituated to stealing only when he becomes rehabituated to hard working and sharing." (Adams, *Manual*, 178).

environmental change takes place that will be conducive to biblical change. Third, the agent begins to dehabituate from old practices. Fourth, the agent rehabituates to new ones.

With regards to questions of morality, Adams' carefully distinguishes between habit proper (H1), habit-as-state (H2), and habituation (H3). Habits proper (H1) and habit-as-state (H2) can be either moral or amoral, depending on their alignment with God's desires. Habituation (H3) itself is a "capacity" in which one gets "out of it the results of what you feed into it" and is therefore "neutral." Finally, habit is ubiquitous. In More Than Redemption, Adams makes the point that if one consistently removed all habits, daily life would be impossible to navigate. Habit is implicated in almost everything one does, from putting on shoes to driving a car. It is likely that Adams made this point in order to encourage the counselee that habit is not hard to do. Further, Adams curiously uses the language of participation to describe habit. It is said that a righteousness can "become a part of you." Habit is therefore implicated in most daily activities and is so ever-present that it can be hard to separate the self from it.

A more detailed definition of habit can now be constructed. For Adams, habit is a multifaceted process whereby the consistent practice of certain behaviors (H1) becomes more

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15 Adams, More Than Redemption, 163.

16 Ibid., 162.


18 Ibid., 181.

19 Ibid.
and more consonant with the personality of the agent so as to become an automatic response (H2). This is accomplished by the process of dehabituation and rehabituation (H3).

Adams' Justification of Habit

Few biblical counselors have been interested in making habituation such a central part of the counseling process. Therefore, Adams must have seen a mandate for its incorporation into his counseling modality. Upon inspection, it can be shown that Adams supported his doctrine through two main pathways: biblical exegesis and biblical anthropology. The following sections will present Adams' reckoning of both.

Exegetical Support for Habit

The following contains Adams' key exegetical arguments for the doctrine of habituation outlined above.

In Hebrews: What Habit Is

Adams cites numerous passages which he claims support his doctrine. One passage that receives attention in multiple sources is Hebrews 5.14. The English Standard Version renders the passage this way: "But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish between good and evil." For Adams, the key term is "trained" (γεγυμνασμένα), which he takes to mean "constant repetition," in this case for the purpose of being able to "discern between good and evil." It is hard to argue with Adams' reading, since γεγυμνασμένα does indicate some sort of

21 Adams, Competent to Counsel, 163.
constant practice. Adams comments that the believer must "practice the good so faithfully that whenever occasions to sin arise, naturally, and without deliberation, he knows what to do and does it with ease and expertness." Adams appears to be advocating that by the "constant repetition" of the practice of righteousness, one learns to discern good and evil.

Adams will make similar claims about Hebrews 12.11. Speaking of God's discipline of his children, the author claims that discipline "yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Adams once again focuses on the training, noting that the Greek root is related to the English word for gymnastics. This implies that "regular, systematic, habitual practice . . . makes the work of the Lord natural." In life as in sports, "as [the Christian] continues to practice, the pattern is etched out more permanently, holiness becomes easier and he becomes more naturally Christian." So as the Christian is more deeply trained through discipline, they will be able to yield righteousness as a result. Adding strength to his exegesis is the fact that γεγυμνασμένα is rendered in the dative case, indicating that discipline is the instrument through which righteousness results. For Adams, habit is akin to training, which is simply constant repetition to the point that righteousness comes naturally to the believer.

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Adams, Competent to Counsel, 164.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 163-164.
Schwab points out the importance of two passages Adams quotes in the *Christian Counselor's Manual* from Jeremiah. These include Jeremiah 13.23 and Jeremiah 22.21. In Jeremiah 13, the prophet is speaking to Israel, questioning whether a leopard can change his spots and concluding that "also you can do good who are accustomed to evil." At first glance, the passage seems strange. The reader knows that a leopard cannot change spots, but also knows that the power of God enables change in even the worst of sinners. This statement finds its proper context in God's judgment on Israel. Therefore, the phrase is best seen as a taunting of Israel's unwillingness to change. Adams' comments on the passage are straightforward. He pits Calvin *contra mundum*, claiming that modern commentators incorrectly see the passage as referring to "the sinful nature with which men are born." In an uncited quotation, Adams points out that Calvin sees the passage as referring to "the habit that is contracted by long practice." Adams rests his case here, and in so doing implies that habit comes from long practice.

He immediately reinforces this assertion by a quotation from Jeremiah 22.21, where the prophet, again speaking to a recalcitrant Israel, cries that "this has been your practice from your youth, that you have not obeyed my voice." Adams then makes no comment about the verse in question in the *Manual*. Elsewhere, Adams will compare this verse to the

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31 Ibid.
32 *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Curiously, the ESV translates "practice" as "way."
process of a child trying to unlearn the habit of slamming a door.\(^{33}\) Just as unlearning slamming the door is difficult if one has done it since they were a child, so too will practicing righteousness be difficult if one has developed a habit of not doing so. Although Adams' exegesis of these passages in Jeremiah is minimal, it is clear that Adams saw the Bible teaching that habit is developed from consistent practice.

**In Ephesians: How Habits Change**

In his commentary on Ephesians, Adams retranslates Ephesians 4.22-24 in his own wording. Crucially, he changes the imperative "put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life . . . [and] be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self" to "you were taught regarding your previous habit patterns to put off the old person . . . and to put on the new person that you are."\(^{34}\) Schwab notes that Adams has substituted "habit patterns" for the more usual rendering of ἀναστροφὴν as "way of life" or "manner of life."\(^{35}\) Claiming that Paul is giving Christians a "how to" on sanctification in this passage, Adams comments that "change is a two factored process" which involves dehabituation of the old man and the rehabituation of the new man.\(^{36}\) Further, change cannot be considered to be complete or effective until new habits have been achieved, reminding the believer that


\(^{35}\) Schwab, "Critique," 75.

"dehabituation is possible only by achieving rehabilitation." It is also important to see that Adams establishes an isomorphism between the old man and old habits patterns and the new man and new habits patterns. Because of this link one can assume that Adams sees Ephesians 4 as speaking directly to the process of changing habits. This process involves the removal of bad habits and the institution of new ones.

Theological Support for Habit

Exegetical constructions often lead to theological superstructures. This is true of Adams' exegetical work regarding habit, for it too leads to a theological structure. Working backwards, if Adams sees habit as essential to solving problems in living, then it must indicate that Adams adheres to a certain view of anthropology which makes habit a requisite part of the counseling process.

Ed Welch points to passages in More Than Redemption that are helpful in this regard. Adams first explains his doctrine of man as duplex. Ruling out the trichotomy view of man as lacking scriptural support and disqualifying the classic dichotomy view as too readily implying separation of man's component parts, Adams offers the proposition that man is a duplex. For Adams, a duplex implies the "unity of the elements [of body and soul]" and that the two are not "twice-cuttable" as dichotomy implies but that they are "twofold" or

37 Ibid.

38 Schwab "Critique," 74-75.


40 Adams, More Than Redemption, 110-111.
"folded together."\textsuperscript{41} So far, this is nothing new, and Adams may have even improved upon older formulations of the human person.

The human person, i.e. duplex, considered \textit{in toto} is called "the whole man."\textsuperscript{42} This whole man contains both the inner person and the outer person.\textsuperscript{43} The inner man is termed "the heart," and includes all inwardly oriented mental processes, including reasoning and intellection, conscience, the "inner, invisible, inaudible" parts of the person, that which is "non-material," and basically "the entire inner life."\textsuperscript{44} Essentially, the inner man is anything not patently physical, and can be assumed to include thinking and any spiritual processes. The second part of man is the outer man. Adams adjudges this from the fact that Scripture consistently contrasts the inward heart with "the visible outer man."\textsuperscript{45} Naturally, this would include all physical aspects of mankind, including his body.

To be briefly noted is how Adams viewed emotions in this regard. Adams excises the emotions from the heart and places them in the gut; how then do they fit in with his anthropology?\textsuperscript{46} The best answer is to say that emotions are physiological reactions to behaviors, wherein behavior is the controlling factor. First, they are physiological reactions because they are located in the gut (\textit{σπλάγχνον}).\textsuperscript{47} Second, emotions are involuntary.\textsuperscript{48} They

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 110.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 115. This is to exclude emotions, which are "not related to the heart but to the viscera" (114).
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 114, 115.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 115.
\textsuperscript{48} Adams, \textit{Competent to Counsel}, 96-97.
cannot be directly controlled or influenced. At first this may be cause for despair, for this implies that the emotions cannot be changed. Adams’ response is to state that “behavior determines feelings.” He bases this assertion off of some very general statements about neurological functioning and concludes that due to the connection between emotions and behavior in the brain, “voluntary behavioral alterations will lead to involuntary emotional changes.” Thusly, one wishing to influence emotions should influence behavior. One wishing to change emotions should simply employ good habits.

Importantly, Adams asserts that σάρξ is best translated not as "sinful nature" but as the sinner's actual "sinful body." Presumably, when Paul speaks of the flesh, he has in mind the outer man. Adams asserts precisely this, stating that the act of regeneration is characterized as an "inner/outer struggle," wherein the regenerated inner man fights with the outer man which is still "habituated to do evil." Synthesizing these thoughts, Welch asserts that Adams sees flesh as "the body as it physically encodes sinful habits which must be reprogrammed through a dehabituation and rehabituation process." Eschewing "mind/body dualism," Adams claims that the power that Christ gives to the inner man enables it to overcome the outer man. Stated succinctly, the inner man is regenerated by Christ, and in this power seeks to eradicate the power of reigning physical sin in the body.

49 Ibid., 97.
50 Ibid., 93.
51 Ibid., 97.
53 Adams, More Than Redemption, 160n1.
54 Welch, "Flesh," 17.
In this light, Adams' anthropology is consistent. Man exists as a duplex of inner and outer man. The inner man includes thinking and spiritual processes and is termed the heart, while the outer man includes the body and is termed the flesh. It is not a stretch to equate inner man with heart and outer man with flesh. These two portions are not separate, but folded together. In conversion and regeneration, the inner man becomes alive to Christ, while the outer man maintains sinful patterns and ways of life. This is cured by waging war against the outer man through the direction of the inner man. Such spiritual warfare not only brings holiness but can influence the emotions as well.

**Habit in Practice**

Given that Adams' definition and justification of habit have been addressed, what remains to be seen is how he envisioned the use of habit as an intervention in a biblical counseling session. Adams offers ample direction in various pamphlets and other publications of how habit is incorporated into a session. These indicate that developing good habits was a central component of treating any mental disturbance.

Consider Adams' advice for those suffering from depression. After socializing the counselee to treatment and sharing the gospel, Adams' first words are that "depression comes as the result of a failure in self-control and self-discipline" and that "one work of the Holy Spirit of God is to produce such discipline in those who . . . seek to please God." Adams then immediately offers the following interventions. First, one must get in the habit of setting

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55 Adams, *More Than Redemption*, 160 n1. The inner man overcomes and yields less to the body. Also, the body is given Christ's power as well.

a routine schedule in order to increase discipline, which is important because breaking good habits can activate feelings of guilt, which encourage depression.\textsuperscript{57} These kinds of feelings are threatening primarily because they "hinder us from carrying out our duties."\textsuperscript{58} The way forward is to fulfill one's responsibilities, even when one does not feel like it.\textsuperscript{59} As one does this, "a change in feelings will take place, as a by-product, in time."\textsuperscript{60} Therefore, the depressed person should make a list of what needs to be done, do it, and "keep at it no matter how you feel."\textsuperscript{61} This constitutes the bulk of Adams' advice to the depressed. Whether or not such advice is simple, it is consistent with the thought that rehabituation is curative.

Adams' approach is more varied in a pamphlet about worry.\textsuperscript{62} After defining worry, he employs a cognitive intervention regarding Christ's words about worry in Matthew 6.31. Adams reminds the reader that "tomorrow always belongs to God," aiding the reader in cognitively reorienting how they think about the world.\textsuperscript{63} After this, Adams encourages the reader to get busy doing what can be done today instead of focusing on "tomorrow's problem."\textsuperscript{64} In the case study he presents, he encourages his counselee to sit down and plan out how to tackle a large problem, which is in contradistinction to the timid servant in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 4-6.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 4.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 5.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 6.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 2 (pagination manually inserted).
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 4-5.
\end{itemize}
Matthew 25, who fails to invest his talent out of worry. The cure to an ailment again lies in fulfilling one's responsibilities. In relation to this, Powlison rightly points out that Adams frequently employs the phrase "whether you feel like it or not." Such advice would need to be heeded in developing habits.

Of course, habit development involved work outside of the counseling room. Adams first cautioned that in an age of "instant pudding, instant coffee . . . [and] instant everything," holiness cannot be immediately obtained. Instead, the Christian should do two things in their daily life to generate good habits. The first is to orient the self around the specific goal of holiness. Specifically, "the goal will come to mind constantly." Second, the believer must stick with the program every day. Discipline is formed by "sustained daily effort," "constant" attention, perhaps "years of regular practice," and by "denying the self." The way of habit is slow, difficult, and often unpleasant. It requires frequent attention of the body and mind, and repetition of basic tasks oriented towards a goal.

Conclusion

For Jay Adams, habituation is one of the keys, if not the key, to biblical change. The Creator has constituted man so that he exists with two natures: physical and rational-spiritual.

65 Ibid.


68 Ibid., 210.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 210-211.
During his time of darkness, the sinful man habituates himself to bad patterns of living. While regeneration changes both the inner and outer man, it is the outer man who still retains patterns of bad behavior that must be altered. Eschewing emotional change as a way to accomplish this, Adams asserts that repetitive, consistent, and daily behavior oriented towards the goal of holiness slowly but surely cures the believer of indwelling sin. Everyday righteous behaviors eventually lead to extended patterns of righteous living. Adams was so certain of this dynamic that he was willing to make it a central part of his counseling interventions. Yet all were not convinced.
CHAPTER 3
GENERATIONAL PUSHBACK: THE COGNITIVE REVOLUTION

Introduction

Theological movements rarely stay the same, and it is natural for them to develop in order to survive. Many second and third generation biblical counselors found Adams' position unbiblical, and struck quickly to rectify the situation. This chapter will detail the major critiques leveled against Adams' view.

Ed Welch and the Location of Sin in the Body

The first clear critique of Adams' doctrine of habit was published in the Spring 2002 issue of the Journal of Biblical Counseling and was entitled, "How Theology Shapes Ministry: Jay Adams's View of the Flesh and an Alternative."\(^1\) Welch's main purpose was not to address Adams' view of habit, although he does so at the end, but rather to correct what he sees as bad anthropology. Welch takes aim at Adams' view of the flesh and offers a view he finds more consistent with redemptive-historical themes.

Welch first constructs his understanding of Adams' anthropology, and concludes that Adams saw the flesh (σάρξ) as "the body as it physically encodes sinful habits which must be

reprogrammed through a dehabituation and rehabituation process."\(^2\) Welch puts it bluntly: Adams is "embedding sin in the body."\(^3\) For Adams', sin is physical. This is different from the more common understandings of the flesh as "our immaterial 'sinful nature.'"\(^4\) Indeed, Welch points out the idiosyncratic nature of Adams' position.\(^5\) This is a crucial distinction, for Welch is asserting that Adams sees the flesh not as an immaterial spiritual principle but as a physical reality that plagues the believer. Welch bewails the logical result of this; namely, Adams' ignorance of "such things as pride, unbelief, or idolatry, because these things are motives of the heart, and the flesh is not located in the heart."\(^6\)

One way to settle this contest would be to judge it based upon word meanings. Welch ponders whether Adams confused \(\sigma\alpha\rho\varsigma\) with \(\sigma\omicron\mu\alpha\).\(^7\) Were this true, then Adams would need to substantiate that \(\sigma\alpha\rho\varsigma\) corresponds with Greek understandings of the physical body. Welch admits that this is partially true and that it "often does refer to the material body, in which case it emphasizes humanity's frailty and the fleeting nature of physical life."\(^8\) Yet when coupled with sin, \(\sigma\alpha\rho\varsigma\) "does not refer to the body, at least in the sense that it has its origin in the body."\(^9\) Welch marshals a good deal of evidence in favor of this, including the fact that in Galatians 5.17, the flesh seems to have something to do with the heart and not the

\(^{2}\) Ibid., 17.
\(^{3}\) Ibid., 21.
\(^{4}\) Ibid., 17.
\(^{5}\) Ibid., 18.
\(^{6}\) Ibid.
\(^{7}\) Ibid.
\(^{8}\) Ibid., 19.
\(^{9}\) Ibid.
body and that in Romans 7, the flesh has no discernible physical quality to it.\textsuperscript{10} Adams, Welch contends, simply ignores this evidence as "theological error," presumably on the part of the modern translators of the New Testament.\textsuperscript{11}

Welch details in twenty bullet points the implications of Adams' position on his counseling interventions. Four are of relevance. First, "self-discipline will be the central task," with its focus on substituting bad behaviors for good ones.\textsuperscript{12} Second, "counseling will focus on repetition and habits."\textsuperscript{13} Third, "faith will be described as establishing new habits more than depending on, trusting in, knowing, and loving in a reciprocal relationship."\textsuperscript{14} Fourth, and important to Welch, is that Adams will miss diagnosing good behavior springing from poor motivations because "the model does not induce one to examine motivations," since "the body doesn't have motivational patterns."\textsuperscript{15} Welch finds this problematic.

Welch then turns toward establishing a more biblical view of the flesh, based upon Ridderbos' biblical theology. Interestingly, Welch also rejects the common notion of flesh as a "warring nature" against the Spirit in favor of one that emphasizes communal modes of living.\textsuperscript{16} For Welch, the flesh and the Spirit represent not a war within human nature, but a more cosmic and eschatological battle between "life under two historical covenants" and


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 24.
"ethical dimensions" The flesh represents a way of living consonant with works righteousness and "striving of the flesh," and is best characterized by the first century Judiazers. The Spirit represents a community of believers who are in union with Christ and "are being liberated from sin's dominion." A simple way of saying this is that flesh and Spirit represent not an internal struggle within the believer but covenantal realities external to the believer. If this is so, then one may "[avoid] the need to find flesh as a programmed pattern of sin in the body." The problem Adams' presents is thusly resolved.

George M. Schwab's Critique of Habituation

The most direct critique of Adams' position came a year later, published in the Winter 2003 edition of the Journal of Biblical Counseling and was entitled "Critique of 'Habituation' as a Biblical Model of Change." The importance of this piece cannot be overstated, as it receives a great deal of attention in later works. Schwab, professor of Old Testament at Erskine, launches two main critiques. The first is that Adams' doctrine of habituation is the result of an integration of the thought of O. Hobart Mowrer and William Glasser with biblical ideas. The second is that Adams' doctrine of habituation lacks exegetical support.

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17 Ibid., 25, 24.
18 Ibid., 24-25.
19 Ibid., 24.
20 Ibid., 25.
Did Adams Integrate?

With regards to the first allegation, Schwab systematically compares the thought of Mowrer and Glasser with that of Adams. First, the three often sound alike. All emphasize the client's problem with reality, the need for a "confrontational and directive model," the importance of maximizing guilt, the importance of the client's continuation of normal duties, and the focus on behavior instead of emotion.\(^2\) Of course, the existence of mere similarities does not imply integration, and Schwab acknowledges that Adams does critique the behavioral school harshly in many areas.\(^3\) Yet Schwab asserts that when Mowrer and Adams' view of habituation are examined more closely, similarities do appear.

For Mowrer, "'habituation' refers to "the processes of conditioning" and using reinforcements,\(^4\) while habits are "learned responses to stimuli."\(^5\) As habits have their sway, "these responses become patterned."\(^6\) A second component of habituation is called "emotional conditioning," wherein voluntary habits influence involuntary emotional responses.\(^7\) This sounds typical of a behaviorist, and yet Mowrer is no typical behaviorist.\(^8\) Although he asserts that habit influences emotion by way of conditioning, he critiques the

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\(^2\) Ibid., 68.

\(^3\) Ibid., 69. Indeed, will Adams claim that Mowrer has joined here with "biblical principle" Schwab contends this is an "accidental discovery;" see Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970), 180-1; quoted in Schwab, "Critique," 69; and Schwab, "Critique," 69.


\(^5\) Schwab, "Critique," 71

\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Mowrer, *Dynamics*, 236-9; quoted in Schwab, "Critique," 71.

\(^8\) Schwab, "Critique," 71.
normal understanding of how this conditioning works. Eschewing the idea that habit forms a connection between a behavior and an instinctual drive, he instead asserts that habit effects a strengthening of the association between the "behavioral act and the emotion of hope" associated with an outcome. Conditioning does not, therefore, connect a behavior and a reward, but rather a behavior and the expectation of good things. This is important, for it means that emotions can be conditioned to certain actions, and therefore changed, much in the same way we learn to ride a bike, converting "conscious choice" into "skillful, unconscious, automatic behavior." For those not yet aware of how similar this is to Adams' conceptualization, Schwab drives the point home:

Both invoke the human physiology of two nervous systems—sometimes using language that is word for word the same. Both separate emotions from voluntary control, and describe them as operating by an 'act right, feel right' logic. Both use commonsense examples of how we develop mechanical skills, and then extend that example to moral and immoral behaviors: Mowrer using bicycle riding and Adams using driving an automobile to illustrate the point. Is it really the case that Adams' theory is entirely anddistinctively biblical? 

At this question one must indeed wonder. The two views are strikingly similar.

Did Adams Exegete?

Yet Schwab should be aware that integration is often an ad hoc allegation that is difficult to substantiate. Perhaps Adams did unknowingly integrate Mowrer's work, maybe by way of habit! Or maybe Mowrer tapped more fully into common grace knowledge and


31 Ibid., 494; summarized in Schwab, "Critique," 71.

32 Schwab, "Critique," 73.
therefore his system more closely resembles the biblical system because of this.\textsuperscript{33} Perhaps for this reason, Schwab rightly makes Adams' exegesis the testing ground, offering a comprehensive critique of Adams' exegesis. Schwab does not directly address Hebrews 5 or 12, but does focus on Hebrews 10.25 ("not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some"), and this verse has direct relevance to Adams' understanding of Hebrews 5 and 12. Schwab claims that the meaning of habit in this passage is not consonant with Adams' understanding of habit as "automatic, unconscious behavior."\textsuperscript{34} Indeed, nothing here requires that habit means what Adams means by it; rather, habit appears to be a deliberate and "highly conscious life."\textsuperscript{35} It takes conscious action to attend church. This is not initially devastating, for Schwab knows that deliberate action is required to build habits. Yet it is fair to ask whether Adams' technical understanding of habit can be superimposed over the biblical one in any of these passages.

Schwab does directly address Adams' exegesis of Jeremiah 22.21. His critique is that Adams has misunderstood the main point of the passage. Jeremiah is not presenting a case for habit here for at least two reasons. First, the passage "holds out no rehabituation hope."\textsuperscript{36} This is problematic because this initially means that redemption from the flesh is impossible, at least in this case. Second, the bad habits in question are enumerated in 22.13 and 22.17 as "social evils:" unjust business practices, killing the innocent, and economic injustice.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{33} As Adams already asserted; see Adams, \textit{Competent to Counsel}, 180-181; quoted in Schwab, "Critique," 69.

\textsuperscript{34} Schwab, "Critique," 79.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 74.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
These are not habits, but conscious choices.\textsuperscript{38} Further, Schwab hints at but fails to explicitly mention that God is prosecuting a covenant lawsuit against the party in question. As such, Jeremiah is not describing how the state of affairs originated but is engaging in rhetorical flourish. This passage therefore does not prove what Adams says it does.

Schwab then goes after Adams' interpretation of Ephesians 4.22-24. Key to his critique are the verses immediately before this. In Ephesians 4.17-21, Paul speaks of how the Gentiles exhibit "futility in their thinking" and "the ignorance that is due to the darkening of their hearts," the sweeping force of which convinces Schwab that "what is actually in view is the inner life, the heart, the understanding, the alienated relationship with God."\textsuperscript{39} Crucially, it is these "faith commitments" which "lead[s] to the behavioral choices" in question.\textsuperscript{40} This is an opposite process than the one described by Adams, wherein cognitive assent leads to improved behavior, instead of improved behavior leading to cognitive assent. Adams has misjudged the biblical texts. Further, nowhere in Paul does it appear obvious that "lying is the same kind of thing as the autonomic reflexes involved in driving a car."\textsuperscript{41} Schwab concludes that "we don't 'turn' to our 'new patterns of response when under stress;' we turn to the Lord."\textsuperscript{42} Here is found an important statement by a newer generation counselor arguing for the primacy of the cognitive over the behavioral in counseling.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 75. Schwab is quoting the New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973).
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
Schwab concludes by making an argument that Adams has engaged in a hermeneutical spiral. Yet he does not see Adams' construction as being without value. He first acknowledges that habit does appear to be a part of human life and that the Bible even speaks to it. Second, he claims that there may be room for habit in biblical counseling, but that this particular theory "is just not taught in his proof-texts." There is promise yet for habit. Yet in closing, Schwab implicitly limits the influence of habit by pitting it and sanctification against one another: "sin and sanctification do not operate the same way as learning the technical skills for operating a car."

The Constructions of Second Generation Counselors

Second and third generation biblical counselors were quick to build on Welch and Schwab's recommendations, instigating a titanic shift in their theology of how change occurs. Essential to this shift were two realities. First, modern biblical counselors added to Adams' system of counseling a theory of heart motivation which became a key component of how more recent counselors would understand the human person. Second, one result of this shift would be a loss of emphasis on the benefits of habit as a modality of intervention in biblical counseling in favor of cognitive ones.

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43 Ibid., 80-83.
44 Ibid., 80.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 82. To this, one might simply retort "why not?"
Heart Motivation

In their dissertations, Heath Lambert and David Powlison assert that behind both Welch and Schwab's critiques was a more general consensus that Adams' theology of counseling failed to adequately account for motivation. To be more accurate, both say that Adams had a theory of motivation, but failed to ever fully work it out.47 Lambert recounts the history of the discussion by detailing differences between Adams and second generation counselors on motivation. Responding to Welch and Schwab's critique, he points out that Adams does in fact speak of motivation, citing an obscure passage where Adams admits that right "action" must always be considered "works motivated by faith and love."48 For Lambert, the problem is not that Adams did not address motivation, but that he simply did not do so enough.49 Powlison's position is the same:

I am not saying that there is a fatal defect within existing biblical counseling. Our problem is a lack of emphasis and articulation.50

These statements serve the very important purpose of designating the work of Welch and others as a natural extension of Adams'.51 The two are in accord, and the case is considered closed.


48 Jay E. Adams, Critical Stages of Biblical Counseling (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 2002), 136; quoted in Lambert, Movement, 74. Lambert will later claim that developments in motivation represent a "critical change to the model first proposed by Adams." Is it a change or continuation? Lambert settles the question by saying that Adams did not discuss fully "details of heart change." The new generation exists not to change the direction of biblical counseling, but to simply fill in some important gaps in knowledge; see Lambert, Movement, 78, 74.

49 Lambert, Movement, 74.

50 Powlison, Biblical Counseling, 244.
Yet how does Adams' view eschew an emphasis on heart motivation? On this point, a return to Welch is indicated. Lambert quotes Welch:

[Adams'] counseling will not be alert to good behavior that has ungodly motivations because, since sin is embedded more in the body than in the heart, the model does not induce one to examine motivations. The body doesn't have motivational patterns: beliefs, desires, hopes, trusts, aspirations, anxieties, identities, etc.\textsuperscript{52}

If one focuses solely on behavioral modification, then one can reasonably achieve behavioral modification without a change of the inner man. Consider the example of a wayward porn addict. An addict can stop looking at pornography (a good outcome) for the purpose of not getting caught by his wife (a bad ultimate motivation). Such a change describes worldly repentance (2 Cor. 7.10), wherein change is achieved aside from the purpose of glorifying God. Although Adams would acknowledge the importance of motivation, he did not consistently or frequently teach it. Therefore, the crisis of motivation existed.

Lambert and Powlison also outlined the way forward for biblical counselors. For modern biblical counselors, the "because of behavior" is due not to sin ensconced in the body but to "the wrongly placed desires in the worship of things that are not God."\textsuperscript{53} More succinctly, Powlison says that "heart leads to walk" and that "every visible sin roots in a far more massive invisible sin."\textsuperscript{54} There is a noticeable difference here. In fact, the two are so different that Powlison will later claim that:

We waste our breath (and precious truths) if we first talk about biblical ways to

\textsuperscript{51} Lambert, \textit{Movement}, 74-80.

\textsuperscript{52} Welch, "Flesh," 22-23; quoted in Lambert, \textit{Movement}, 73.

\textsuperscript{53} Lambert, \textit{Movement}, 78.

\textsuperscript{54} Powlison, \textit{Biblical Counseling}, 244.
control anger, counteract depression . . . and restructure one's life to eliminate drug addiction. Those should come second as the fruit of repentance.  

On this point Lambert takes up the mantle in his description of the development of the doctrine of "idols of the heart." Lambert finds broad support for this concept among current biblical counselors, including Welch, Powlison, Paul and Tedd Tripp, and Fitzpatrick. Yet it is his scriptural citations that are more elucidating. Following Powlison, Lambert points to Ezekiel 14:1-8, wherein God claims that certain Israelites have "taken their idols into their hearts." What does such a phrase mean? According to Fitzpatrick, it means that "idols aren't just stone statues" but "thoughts, desires, longings, and expectations that we worship in place of the true God." With the use of this phrase, the newer generation of biblical counselors advanced the idea that idols were not only physical but spiritual and immaterial as well. Idols are to be seen as intrapsychic and cognitive goals towards which the sinner yearns. They are that which is "worshipped" and substituted for God. Indeed, it is the act of worship which is "the key that unlocks the door of motivation." Lambert finds this view more concordant with biblical passages regarding the heart, including Jesus' statement that "our behavior springs from motives in the heart" (Mk. 7:18-23).

55 Ibid., 246.
56 Lambert, Movement, 75-78.
59 Lambert, Movement, 75.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 78.
It can now be said that the second generation of counselors instituted a revolution in the field's understanding of motivation. Instead of seeing good behavior resulting from practiced habits they saw it is a result of a radical heart change. Worship of God or idols was now seen as the controlling factor in behavior. Wary of removing themselves too far from their founder, they were careful to denote how this change was simply the natural evolution of the movement. Such an understanding received near universal assent.62

The Excision of Habit

Although newer generations claimed that their position represented a natural continuation of Adams’ view, their lack of emphasis on constructing a more positive view of habit is noticeable. In their critiques, Welch, Schwab, Lambert, and Powlison rarely mentioned habit or how it could be a useful counseling intervention. While habit has not been completely ignored by newer generations, it is the case that newer generations have failed to appropriately include habituation in their constructions, as evidenced below.

The Cognitive Emphasis of Jeremy Pierre

Perhaps a paradigmatic example of how the heart is addressed by a second generation counselor is more helpful in establishing this fact. Jeremy Pierre, professor of biblical counseling at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, published a 2016 manuscript entitled The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life which speaks to this very issue. In it, Pierre attempts to provide a comprehensive theology of how to address the heart in counseling contexts. The second and third sections of the book are of relevance, for here he enumerates

62 Ibid., 76.
the four things the heart responds to and provides ways of intervening in these areas. These four areas are: God and Worship, Self and Identity, Others and Influence, and Circumstances and Meaning. It is under the fourth category wherein habit would fall.

Pierre begins this chapter in a way that hints at collusion with Adams: "the dynamic heart responds to circumstances by assigning meaning to the significant events and general routines of life." At first glance, the phrase "routines of life" sounds very similar to habit. Yet Pierre's understanding of routines is far different from Adams' view of habit. For Pierre, daily routine is not the establishment of virtuous habit, but rather the context of discerning heart commitments:

All of these [routines], and countless more, make up the contextual settings to which people respond, and over time, those responses form into characteristic patterns. Once people identify what general routines they face, they can explore how their responses are shaped by those general routines.

Two things are of note here. First, Pierre agrees with Adams that habitual actions can in fact form patterns of behavior. Second, and more importantly, habits can influence the responses of those so involved. This appears similar to Adams' view.

Yet Pierre takes a different path than Adams on this point. Renewed habit is not the solution to poor responses to situations. Rather, the solution is a biblical cognitive reappraisal of the situation. Pierre's reasoning is that "events provide new data that compels some kind of change in existing beliefs and values—by adding to them, altering them, or


64 Ibid., 165.

65 Ibid., 173-174.
replacing them.\textsuperscript{66} Events affect humans in the sense that they provide data for cognitive processes. Pierre continues:

To use dynamic heart language, people's control beliefs will determine how they interpret circumstances; their control values will determine how they feel about circumstances; and their control commitments will determine what choices they make in response to circumstances. These structures are the catalog system for arranging the library of facts about life. \textit{Thus, helping people renew these structures is the key to helping them rightly understand the events of their lives.}\textsuperscript{67}

If events affect the person by affecting their thinking, then changing one's thinking is the way to resolution. Pierre advocates what he calls a "Godward perspective," which is viewing one's life from "the larger purposes of God in redemptive history."\textsuperscript{68} Notice also that altering cognitions is also the way to alter emotions, in contradistinction to Adams' assertion that good habits alter emotions. This is a very different view than that of Adams.

Pierre is concerned with obedient behavior, however. Careful to avoid behavioralist language, he says that "while a counselor's instruction does not begin and end with behavior, it certainly addresses behavior with specific, practical instruction and accountability."\textsuperscript{69} True to his word, he provides various practical instructions for improving behavior.\textsuperscript{70} Yet at no point does he refer to developing habits or habituation. While stating that "heart change occurs as it is lived out, shaping and reinforcing new values and commitments," it is not this living out which changes a person.\textsuperscript{71} Instead, it is faith working through the believer which

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 171.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 167, emphasis mine.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 222-223. In the related footnote, Pierre notes that change is both cognitive and behavioral.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 225ff.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 222.
effects behavioral change.\textsuperscript{72} For Pierre, faith is not merely cognitive, but something which transcends the cognitive to affect all of life.\textsuperscript{73}

**Paul Tripp's Cognitive Emphasis**

Perhaps one of the most popular books ever written by a biblical counselor, Paul David Tripp's 2002 monograph *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* also focuses heavily on cognitive delivery methods in counseling. The general purpose of the book is to help Christians learn how to minister to other Christians for the purpose of building them up in the faith. According to Tripp, this is mainly accomplished through speaking the truth in love.

The book contains three basic sections. In the first, Tripp addresses preliminary matters involved in the change process, including the building of self-awareness. In the second, Tripp urges the believer to truly enter the world of the other for the purpose of "build[ing] relationships that encourage this work of change."\textsuperscript{74} The third section covers the methodology of change, which Tripp summarizes as speaking the truth in love. It is here where Tripp's focus can be truly examined.

Although Tripp does acknowledge that the true "foundation for people-transforming is not sound theology; it is love," he also acknowledges that a large part of the change process involves "confrontation."\textsuperscript{75} Confrontation, or "rebuke" is "the word that the Bible

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 223.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ibid. See also Frank Theilman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 698; quoted in Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 223.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 117, 221.
\end{itemize}
uses for bringing truth to where change is needed.” 76 What does this look like in everyday life? Confrontation is not necessarily a major event or a "radical moment of truth telling," but rather is a process of "ongoing honesty" that leads to "many mini-moments of confrontation." 77 Confrontation involves asking questions, 78 evaluating the events involved, 79 discerning the heart, 80 guiding in confession, 81 and committing to change. 82 It can be enhanced by both use of Scripture and metaphor. 83 Described in this way, confrontation is primarily a cognitive intervention.

This is fitting with Tripp's alignment of confrontation with his "Speak" category of interventions. 84 Truly, confrontation is about speaking truth to someone in error. Tripp does include a "Do" category of interventions as well. In describing these, Tripp makes no mention of habit. Rather, doing in personal ministry concerns itself with the counselor's ability to "help your friend Do something with what she learns." 85 It is possible that Tripp could be implying something about habit, but it is best to see this as a concern with right thinking leading to right living. For Tripp, cognitive change is primary.

76 Ibid., 200.
77 Ibid., 203.
78 Ibid., 224.
79 Ibid., 226.
80 Ibid., 228.
81 Ibid., 228-9.
82 Ibid., 230-1.
83 Ibid., 232-5.
84 Ibid., 200.
85 Ibid., 112.
Garrett Higbee, *Counseling the Hard Cases, and Cognition*

Finally, examining a case study provided by a prominent biblical counselor is very elucidating in helping to understand how newer generations have replaced habituation from the counseling arsenals in favor of cognitive interventions. In Lambert and Scott's 2012 collection of case studies *Counseling the Hard Cases*, Garrett Higbee demonstrates the modern cognitive emphasis.

First, Higbee provides a treatment plan for bipolar disorder. Higbee tells the story of "Tony," a man who had been diagnosed by secular practitioners with bipolar disorder.\(^{86}\) Higbee's interventions included the following. First, the counselor would listen to the counselee's life story as a way of gathering data.\(^ {87} \) Second, the counselor would aid the counselee in making meaning out of their story, with a special emphasis on heart motivations and idolatry.\(^ {88} \) The next critical step is bringing this new data to bear on the counselee. Higbee identifies Tony's problem as cognitive in nature: "what Tony believed about God and the world around him had influenced his symptomatic actions, feelings, and perspectives."\(^ {89} \) The counselee is then presented this reinterpretation for the purpose of "refram[ing] their problems biblically, using their language and exposing heart themes to show the how God viewed their story," which aids in making the conversation more biblical.\(^ {90} \)


\(^{87}\) Ibid., 180-181.

\(^{88}\) Ibid., 181-182.

\(^{89}\) Ibid., 182.

\(^{90}\) Ibid.
Next, Higbee offers the client a "Four Common Heart Themes" chart which "helped them see what lenses they viewed life through."\(^{91}\) The rest of his interventions involve some form of confrontation, using the Scriptures, working towards forgiveness, and planning ahead.\(^{92}\) Yet even here, the cognitive emphasis takes the lead. Higbee is concerned with helping Tony "understand God's perspective" and is happy to have "reinvented" many of Tony's issues.\(^{93}\) Strikingly, at no point does Higbee advocate for any kind of habitual behavior or patterned practice. Instead, it is the cognitive that appears to have the power to transform.

**Counterpoint: The New Generation's Use of the Body**

It would be unfair to the newer generations to claim that they have completely ignored the embodied in counseling for the sake of the cognitive. Numerous examples exist that present a more balanced picture.\(^{94}\) For example, Jim Newheiser labors towards balance by eliminating the "harmful false dichotomy between proclaiming the gospel and our obedient response to the gospel."\(^{95}\) Newheiser challenges the idea that "simply proclaiming and meditating upon the gospel would produce biblical change" by claiming that the existence of New Testament exhortations indicate that we must also "hear and heed God's

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\(^{91}\) Ibid., 183-186. A thought chart of this nature has always been a major component of cognitive-behavioral interventions.

\(^{92}\) Ibid., 186-193.

\(^{93}\) Ibid., 186, 190.

\(^{94}\) My thanks to Nate Brooks for bringing these resources to my attention.

commands."\(^{96}\) Likewise, Lambert advocates for "radical measures" of "practical" action which can help the believer struggling with pornography, including altering modes of transportation, allaying purchasing ability, and engaging in accountability.\(^{97}\) Such actions "can never change your heart" but may constitute "expressions of real change."\(^{98}\)

Ed Welch's contribution to this matter is highly technical. Beginning with anthropology, Welch claims that Scripture advocates for a modified interactionist understanding of the relationship between the body and brain.\(^{99}\) This position holds that "the body can influence the mind, and the mind can influence the body."\(^{100}\) To this end, Welch advocates a variety of embodied interventions, including "self-control and discipline" in general and "routines" involving "structure" for those diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder.\(^{101}\) Presumably this is done since the body is not a "second class citizen... and is indispensable to the activity of the heart."\(^{102}\) Since the body holds some sway over the mind, embodied actions should be prescribed.

The problem with such formulations is not that they fail to advocate for embodied actions in holiness, but that they fail to provide a consistent basis for habitual practice. Although Welch advocates for the importance of the body, he eventually backtracks from

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96 Ibid., 43-44.

97 Heath Lambert, Finally Free! Fighting For Purity With the Power of Grace (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 66, 60, 68.

98 Ibid., 72-73.


100 Ibid., 29.

101 Ibid., 43, 142.

102 Ibid., 39.
this position. The body is only the "mediator of moral action" and is therefore the "equipment of the heart . . . do[ing] what the heart tells it to do."103 Statements like this question Welch's initial interactionist assumption regarding what role the body can truly play in sanctification by leaving little role for body other than to passively function as the heart's equipment.104 In fairness to Welch, he would likely claim that the body influences the mind, but not the heart.105 Yet the language is imprecise and leaves unclear the role of the body in sanctification. Consider also Lambert's statement that embodied actions do not change the heart or "automatically transform your internal desires" but yet constitute "expressions of real change."106 If embodied actions do not produce real heart change, can the change that they do produce really be considered true change?

Although the newer generations should be appreciated for prescribing the use of the body in sanctification, their justification for this appears to require further development. Does the body actually change the inner man, or is it merely the output function for the heart? It is difficult to tell how newer generations would answer this question. Further, none of the authors above actually mentions habituation even though one can reasonably infer that the protocols that Lambert or Welch recommend are to be repeated and practiced like habit. One reason for this discrepancy is that the anthropological explanations presented by newer

103 Ibid., 40.

104 In fact, Welch does mention that the body can control the heart, but only when "Satan has accomplished a kind of anthropological reversal," where "chaos reigns;" see Welch, Blame It, 40-41. Cf., M. Quoist, The Christian Response (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1965), 4; quoted in Welch, Blame It, 40.

105 A position similar to that of the present work.

106 Lambert, Finally Free, 72-73. Lambert is careful to avoid saying that embodied actions constitute real change, but rather they are the expression of it or the "first steps." Given this, perhaps his position is straightforward: someone whose heart has changed will move out in the body to act out holiness. If so, this position likely represents less of a desired balance in this regard.
generations leave little conceptual space for habituation. If the true action occurs in the heart and if the body is just an appendage of the heart, then habits appear pointless. Perhaps this is why newer generations have tended to more heavily emphasize cognitive interventions.

Conclusion

What can be concluded from an examination of these works is a variety of things. First, second generation counselors make their emphasis altering the inner world of the human heart. Second, they attempt to do so by altering cognitions and putting them in alignment with the Bible and engendering faith. Third, habituation as a model of change is almost entirely absent.

The sum result of this orientation is, as has been before alleged, to instigate a revolution in biblical counseling. No longer focusing on the body as the source of humanity's main problem, newer practitioners would shift their emphasis to healing the heart. Yet the heart was characterized in increasingly cognitive terms with cognitive solutions as the one mentioned above being offered. In liberating themselves from Adams' anthropology, newer generations of biblical counselors substituted their own views and were consistent in prescribing interventions consistent with their presuppositions. What remained to be seen was whether or not this solution was more biblical than Adams'.
CHAPTER 4
EVALUATING COMPETING COUNSELING MODELS

Introduction

Was Adams' model truly as unbiblical as his opponents said? Was the model advanced by newer generations more biblical? This chapter will evaluate each position from a biblical perspective and will demonstrate that although each side captures much of what is true about the counseling process, each side is also lacking in important biblical emphases.

Evaluation of Adams' Model

The second generation expressed their displeasure at Adams' understanding of sanctification by significantly altering it. As has already been documented, they provided copious biblical reasons for so doing. Yet not only these but more critiques may be of service. An evaluation of Adams' anthropology, exegesis, and view of habit will aid in this regard.

Evaluating Adams' View of the Flesh

Adams was criticized for two errors regarding his view of the flesh. First, he conflated \( \sigma\rho\varsigma \) and \( \sigma\omicron\mu\alpha \), which led him to associate the flesh with the actual physical body. Detractors would point out that this view is unique in church history, with Adams' responding that translators have simply misunderstood the term. Who is right?
It is George Eldon Ladd who provides the definitive answer. Calling σαρξ "the most difficult and complicated aspect of the Pauline psychology," Ladd asserts that the word can in fact refer to the physical body.¹ Paul often extends this term to refer to humanity as a whole as well, the abstract concept of "human existence," and a way of seeing things from the human perspective.² Clearly the term is used in a variety of ways.³

Another way in which Paul uses the word is called the ethical use, which Ladd calls "the most important feature about this usage is that humanity as flesh is contrasted with Spirit, is sinful, and without the aid of the Spirit cannot please God."⁴ It is this usage which is relevant to Adams' own understanding, for Adams was concerned with the flesh's relationship to sin. Ladd states that the differences in Paul's ethical usage should be obvious: the flesh in Gal. 2.20 ("the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God") is vastly different from the flesh in Romans 8.9 ("you, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit").⁵

In vindication of Adams, Ladd notes that others in church history have seen the ethical flesh as being found in the physical body. Such proponents include W. Morgan and O. Pfleiderer, the latter of which Ladd describes as advocating the idea that Paul sees sin as "a demonic spiritual being [which] finds its residence in the physical flesh," with the flesh

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² Ibid., 509. Ladd cites. Rom. 9.3, 9.8, 11.14, 1 Cor. 10.18. He also considers the RSV translation of 2 Cor. 5.16 as evidence as well (510).

³ Ibid., 508.

⁴ Ibid., 511.

⁵ Ibid.
becoming "the seat and organ of the demonic sinful principle." This is similar, but not identical, to Adams' view, as all parties agree that sin becomes comingled with the physical flesh.

Yet at the point three charges can be laid against Adams. First, O. Pfleiderer was a liberal. This may not prove anything, but it does demonstrate that this view is outside of mainstream orthodoxy. Second, this view becomes dangerously similar to Platonism, with a characteristic disavowal of the flesh. More convincing, however, is Ladd's main criticism of this point: "Paul did not view the body as sinful per se; and therefore when sarx is viewed as sinful, it must refer to something other than physical material that constitutes my body." Evidence of this can be seen in 1 Cor. 6.13-19, where it is obvious that the body is a good thing, for not only are Christians' "bodies . . . members of Christ," (1 Cor. 6.15) but the Spirit of God dwells within the human body. Adams would certainly respond that he does not see the body as bad, but it is difficult for him to escape this claim while maintaining that sin is embodied.

What is the proper way to interpret the ethical use of σαρξ? Ladd offers that the ethical flesh refers to "humanity as a whole, seen in its fallenness, opposed to God." Here is Ladd's key distinction: that σαρξ refers not to a "part of humanity but humanity as a whole—

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7 Ibid., 512. Ladd cites 1 Cor. 6.13-20 and 7.34 in favor of this.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 515.
unregenerate, fallen, sinful humankind."¹⁰ This can be understood in two ways. First, Ladd
could mean that the flesh is the whole of the individual sinful man, as opposed to just his
inner flesh principle. Second, Ladd could mean the mass of collective sinful mankind in a
Corporate sense. Most likely Ladd means by this a general principle of separation from God
in which mankind participates both individually or corporately.¹¹ Although Ladd is unclear
which option he prefers, either interpretation opposes Adams in that Ladd refuses to
subdivide the flesh within the human person, seeing it as an external principle.¹² This is
because Scripture pits not the "flesh and the human spirit against" one another, but rather the
"human flesh and the Spirit of God" (Rom 8.9).¹³ There is no parallelism here that would
allow one to advocate for the flesh as being part of mankind.

In summary, Ladd's offers three claims. First, the flesh is not a physical entity. This
rules out any notion that sin can be embedded or embodied. Second, the flesh does not
represent diverse constituents within or a "dualism innate in humanity's nature."¹⁴ The flesh
is not a part of human nature in the way that the body is. Third, this leaves only one logical
solution: the flesh transcends the individual parts of the body and is considered to be fallen
human nature itself.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See Ibid., 515-516. The flesh active when "the whole realm of that person's life is devoted to the
human level." In Rom 8.9, one is said to be "in the flesh." For E.D. Burton, the flesh is "an inherited impulse to

¹² See Ibid., 512-513.

¹³ Ibid., 513.

¹⁴ Ibid., 512.
If this is the true biblical case, then Adams' understanding is incomplete, for Adams cannot maintain that the flesh refers to the sinful body. Not only does the Bible see the flesh as not referring to the physical body alone, but it also sees the flesh as something much more. The flesh is not part of a man, but a principle in which the whole man participates, and as such, transcends man as it incorporates man into it. Perhaps Adams has made a categorical mistake by confounding the ethical use of σαρξ with different Pauline usages which do include the physical body in their lexical range, leading him to his idiosyncratic conclusion. If so, Adams' doctrine is incomplete.

Evaluating Adams' View of Habit

Adams' view of habit can be evaluated in two ways. First, his exegesis can be evaluated from a biblical perspective. When done, it will be clear that, although Adams' exegesis finds more support than his detractors claim, it still is problematic in important ways. Second, upon examination of his theological construction of habituation, weaknesses will be found. Had Adams been aware of this and made a few slight changes, his theory might have been more acceptable to newer generations.

Evaluating Adams' Exegesis

One must now briefly turn to Adams' expositions of the three passages already addressed in Hebrews, Jeremiah, and Ephesians. Central to Adams' claims in regards to Hebrews is his assertion that the Christian's training in righteousness forms an isomorphism with his understanding of habit. Is this the case? John Owen claims that the word for trained
here "does not refer to actual exercise but the readiness and ability and fitness of anything that is acquired through assiduous exercise." F.F. Bruce agrees:

It is [the] ethically mature, those . . . who have built up in the course of experience a principle or standard of righteousness by which they can pass discriminating judgment on moral situations as they arise. The general idea is widespread among contemporary writers on ethics, although our author uses it for a purpose of his own. These two comments are loaded with implications. For one, they both affirm that some kind of habituation is required in sanctification. Owen refers to training as similar to a soldier's drilling. This would require some kind of habitual training, if not specifically what Adams meant by it. Bruce even says that Paul has adapted pagan philosophical understandings of ἕξις, which according to him would include "experience or skill acquired through practice." This concords not perfectly but very well with Adams' own understanding.

Where these understandings differ with that of Adams is concerning what is habituated. Adams will argue that it is the body which must be drilled and habituated. Owen and Bruce argue that it is the mind. For Owen, it is "our minds [which are] exercised . . . increasing in grace and knowledge through study, meditation, prayer, and listening to the Word." Likewise, Bruce urges that it is the "senses" which are "exercised to discern between good and evil," who have built up in the course of experience a principle or standard of righteousness by which they can pass discriminating judgment.


17 Ibid., 109 n85.

18 Owen, Hebrews, 135.

19 Bruce, Hebrews, 109.
argues that habit is part of sanctification, the book of Hebrews agrees with him. Insofar as he argues that it is the body and not the mind that is habituated, the author of Hebrews disagrees with him.

Adams' exegesis of Jeremiah 13.23 achieves mixed success as well. As he already noted, Calvin is in his corner on this passage. So too will J.A. Thompson agree with Adams: "deep-seated wickedness caused by centuries of schooling and repeated excursions into idolatry had made evil a virtually fixed feature of her life and behavior." Thompson identifies a causal connection. Cognitive education and experiential idolatry combined to solidify bad habits in the life of Israel. Again, Adams may have tried to superimpose his own view of habit over this, but the development of evil through habit is certainly assumed here.

Adams' could have strengthened his exegesis by giving more attention to context. Schwab's initial objection to Adams' understanding concords nicely with Derek Kidner's, for both agree that this passage clearly indicates that the evil of Israel cannot be undone. Through Jeremiah, the Lord is saying that the evil state of His children cannot be dehabituated. This does not necessarily sink Adams' argument so much as point out his silence regarding what this verse implies for his doctrine. Apparently, one can so train themselves in unrighteousness that there is no hope of salvation (cf. Rom. 1.28-32). Something stronger than rehabituation is required in such a case.

In Ephesians, Adams argues that the "put off, put on" language directly corresponds to his understanding of dehabituation and rehabituation. Once again, he is partially right.


Commentators will agree with Adams that what is in view here is the mortification of old habitual ways of living.\(^{22}\) They will disagree by asserting that the grammatical construction necessitates that this action has already been accomplished. Chappell argues that the infinitive construction in view here does not indicate that putting off and putting on is a present imperative for the believer, but rather constitutes the content of what they have been taught.\(^{23}\) Thusly, "Paul is not telling the Ephesians to keep putting to death the old man that is already dead" but to remember the definitive act that has already taken place.\(^{24}\) Boice, who cites Stott and Lloyd-Jones as allies, notes that the parallel aorist construction in Col. 3.9-10 "refers to something that has already happened, not to something to be done."\(^{25}\) This is not to say that Paul does not urge continued obedience, but rather that the "put off put on" language is less of an imperative for the believer as it is an indicative giving them motivation for holiness.\(^{26}\) If this is the case, Adams is incorrect on this point, as are many others who use the language in this way. At the very least, the passage has little to do with habits.

In overview, two generalizations can be made. First, these passages, especially Hebrews 5, do indicate that some use of habit is a requisite part of the sanctification process. Sanctification involves training, and training implicitly involves participation in habit. Second, whatever the biblical authors had in mind in these passages regarding habit, it is not


\(^{23}\) Chappell, *Ephesians*, 210 n11.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 209-210.

\(^{25}\) Boice, *Ephesians*, 166.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 167.
the highly specialized and technical definition that Adams advances. Particularly because of his misreading of Ephesians 4, Adams has no real exegetical evidence for dehabituation and rehabituation. Rather, Reformed exegetes only identify some form of habitual engagement with the Word as means toward forming the mind in holiness. One will have to look elsewhere in Scripture if a doctrine of habit is to be salvaged.

Evaluating Adams’ Theological Construction

If one’s exegesis is inaccurate, then inconsistencies in the theological constructions which follow should be expected. With Adams, these inconsistencies occur in the area of motivation. Although Adams did not ignore motivation, he did not fully emphasize it either. Recall Welch’s concern that Adams’ counseling program "will focus on repetition and habits" and that it will "not induce one to examine motivations."27 This claim is both problematic and true.

On the one hand, Adams might defend himself by claiming that he has neither ignored motivation or the heart but has rather placed them in their proper context. Recall that Adams saw the alteration of emotions to be a byproduct of the habituation process. Thusly, one could conceivably alter heart motivation by the disciplined practice of habits. The difference between Adams and Welch would therefore be one of order and not of emphasis.

Adams did not choose to defend himself using this path, instead reaffirming his view of the flesh and claiming that he does address motivation in his response to Welch. Further, Adams even saw motivation as being first in the order of change. Given this response, one must question whether Adams can truly say that he has given appropriate emphasis to motivation. The path towards resolution on this matter requires an examination of Adams’ use of the term "behavior patterns."

Recall that Adams frequently claimed that good habits create good patterns of behavior. At no known point in his writings does Adams go any further than this to describe how habits might change the inner man. Instead, habits merely produce changes in patterns of behavior. This kind of language makes the change envisioned sound mechanistic and behaviorally oriented, since behavior patterns tend to constitute change in the outer man. Patterns, after all, are impersonal and impassive. Dogs can create new patterns of behavior, as can Pharisees, without any discernible internal motivational change. Rather, true biblical change stems from the heart (Mt. 5.19). This point the newer generations made well. Adams' language regarding motivation and change therefore left much to be desired, and although he does speak about the importance of motivation, he could have done so more clearly.

One interesting route of compromise—the one that will be advocated in this thesis—is to state that habituation does more than simply alter behavior. Instead, habituation contains


the power to change the mind, body, and perhaps even the motivation of the believer.\textsuperscript{31} Such a compromise would give credence both to the importance of habit that Adams foresaw and to the primacy of the heart change for which newer generations advocate. This will be examined below.

**Evaluation of the Second Generation's Model**

In evaluation of the second generation's corrections of Adams' model, at least three things can be said. First, the second generation was right to point out Adams' lack of awareness of motivational pieces in the process of sanctification. Although he does on occasion speak to human motivation, he does not do so frequently or consistently. Perhaps Adams saw motivation as yet another emotion that could only become attenuated through habit, and for this reason mostly ignored its impact on righteous living.

The second generation's first contention is further vindicated by their second insistence that proper motivation comes from the heart. Lambert is correct to center his critique of Adams on Mark 7:18-23, where the Lord teaches that it is:

\begin{quote}
from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride,
\end{quote}

foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.\textsuperscript{32}

The clear connection that Jesus teaches is that bad behavior results from a bad heart, while the unstated corollary is that good behavior results from a good heart. Lambert agrees that "Jesus clearly instructs that all behavior that humans engage in, including their thinking . . . springs from deep motives within the heart."\textsuperscript{33} If this is correct, then changing the heart should be the prime directive of biblical counseling.

Yet how does one change a heart? It is at this third point that the modern generation of biblical counseling deserves a critique. Responding to Welch's article, Adams criticizes Welch for failing to offer any viable alternative to his theory of habituation:

I ask again, if not by a process of habituation, how does sin in the body, in the flesh, and in the members come about? How is it put off and how are new ways put on, if this doesn't involve learning about these from Scripture, asking God to enable one to obediently do what is right—and then doing it? . . . Can you think of anything other than habit which clearly fits the bill?\textsuperscript{34}

This is a fair point. If habituation is to be discarded, what is to be put in its place? Even more, given Scripture's frequent mentioning of habituation, can it be discarded?\textsuperscript{35} Responding to Welch's claim that Adams' model is too focused on discipline, Adams replies:

The Bible is highly repetitive. There must be a reason for this! Moreover God has made the same man who "develops" a tennis serve by repetition able to learn many other things that way. Why should we not expect Him to help people learn how to live according to the Scriptures in a similar fashion? Christians may "learn" many things by the same means, but the great difference about counseling is that God

\textsuperscript{32} Heath Lambert, \textit{The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams} (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 78. Mk 7. 21-23.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Adams, "What Alternative?," 170.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Cf.}, the discussion on p. 46-49. Consider Adams' comments: "The Bible is highly repetitive. There must be a reason for this!"; see Adams, "What Alternative?," 167.
directs, motivates and enables us to make the behavioral changes addressed. Repetition of thought and action is but one element in the process of sanctification.\textsuperscript{36}

Adams is reminding his interlocutors that sanctification involves some kind of repetitive activity and that this reality is obvious in the Bible.\textsuperscript{37}

As previously mentioned, the second generation's response to this is to contend that the heart is changed through cognitive interaction with the Word of God. This has been the consistent Protestant position for centuries, and is firmly supported by the Scriptures (Col. 3.6, Acts 12.24, Heb. 4.12, 2 Tim. 3.16-17, Rom 12.2). While no one can contend against this position, one may reasonably ask whether this is all that is involved in sanctification. How should the counselor deal with talk of "training in righteousness" in the New Testament? What should they make of the fact that Scripture does seem to be repetitive in certain areas? Even 2 Tim. 3.16-17, with all its emphasis on the power of the Word, mentions that the Scriptures are sufficient precisely for the purpose of "training in righteousness." Newer generations of biblical counselors have failed to reap the benefits of this biblical emphasis, opting to primarily focus their modalities around cognitive change. If Adams focused too much on habit, then second and third generation counselors focused too little on the subject.

This is to say that contemporary counselors can benefit from shifting their emphases. In his 2016 manuscript on the power of habit, James K. A. Smith argues that modern society

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} Or consider this quote from the venerable Puritan doctor Sibbes: "As the body is beholding to the soul for the ruling and guiding of it, so the soul is beholding to the body for many things; as now in the very sacrament, God helps the soul with the senses; Christ, as it were, in the sacrament enters through the senses more lively than in the preaching of the word, for there he enters in by the ears, but in the sacrament he is seen, tasted, handled, felt. So that the soul and body have communion together by way of information." Richard Sibbes, Josiah's Reformation, Puritan Paperbacks (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2011), 92.
has embraced a Cartesian\textsuperscript{38} view of personhood, ultimately leading many Christians to see humans as "thinking things" or "brains-on-a-stick."\textsuperscript{39} If this is the case, then the proper modality for change will always be focused upon the cognitive, meaning that learning becomes "primarily a matter of depositing beliefs and ideas into mind-containers" and discipleship becomes "primarily a didactic endeavor."\textsuperscript{40} Smith calls on Christians to reject such "reductionistic" models in favor of "a more holistic, biblical model of human persons that situates our thinking and knowing in relation to other, more fundamental aspects of the human person."\textsuperscript{41} Embracing such a biblically balanced view is "not the same as rejecting thinking" altogether, nor does it represent a "slide into an anti-intellectualist embrace of emotion and feelings."\textsuperscript{42} Rather, so doing through a utilization of habit brings believers closer to Scripture.\textsuperscript{43}

It would be unfair to say that the above critique accurately characterizes newer generations of counselors, as some examples exist where prominent contemporary counselors advocate for habits and embodied change. Yet the newer generations deemphasize habituation in their writings while heavily emphasizing cognitive interventions, making it often appear as if their anthropologies favor the mind over the body. They do this either by

\textsuperscript{38} This view was Platonic before it was Cartesian. Ironically, older and newer biblical counselors have unwittingly played out the ancient debate between Plato and Aristotle regarding moral change. Aristotle argued that habit was central, while Plato argued that knowledge was central. The fact that this argument has been transposed into a modern biblical counseling framework indicates that both sides are working with inadequate anthropological emphases. Cf. Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics," 3.2


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 5-6.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 6-7.
seeing embodied acts as only functioning as the output of the heart or by primarily prescribing cognitive reappraisals as solutions to embodied problems. The true problem with the formulations of newer counselors likely comes down to emphasis. Just as Adams did not sufficiently emphasize his doctrine of motivation, newer generations do not sufficiently emphasize habituation in a balanced way. There is another way forward.

Conclusion

Having first examined Jay Adams' view of habituation, it has been partially rejected for want of biblical support. Secondly, an examination of how newer counselors understand motivation and change was conducted, with the result being a critique of their model for relying too heavily on cognitive interventions. The major problem with these positions is that they fail to provide a biblical explanation for how the body and mind interact.

The Bible offers Christians a view of sanctification that both utilizes cognitive grappling with God's Word and habitual practices of righteousness as a means to heart and life change. Although this view has not yet been utilized by biblical counselors, it holds great promise of the advancement of the movement. In essence, it is this: although it is the Word of God believed by faith and empowered by the Spirit which is the primary means of change in sanctification, habitual practices of righteousness enable the believer to more clearly understand the Word through actually effecting a change in disposition in the inner man. This view can be substantiated by attending to the biblical accounts of knowing which involve these two processes.
CHAPTER 5
BIBLICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS REGARDING SANCTIFICATION

Introduction
Thus far, a critique of two different visions of sanctification has been attempted. In one corner stands the view of Jay E. Adams, who sees habituation as a key element in ridding the body of sinful patterns embedded in the flesh. In the other stands the newer generation of biblical counselors who deemphasize habituation and favor the cognitive transfer of biblical knowledge as the key element in sanctification. Both views contain truth but are incomplete. What is needed is a view of sanctification that corrects the errors of each view while remaining faithful to a biblical vision of sanctification. The answer is not far away, for both visions actually lay hold of the biblical truth, with Scripture offering the proper vantage point. Yet first some of the Bible’s presuppositions regarding the knowing process must be examined.

Biblical Presuppositions Regarding Knowing and Holiness
There are two key biblical presuppositions about knowing and sanctification which must first be elucidated in order to reconcile the beliefs of Adams and his followers. The first is that the Bible does view a central component of sanctification to be the transfer of propositional beliefs from Bible to the heart through the ministry of the Word. Second, the Bible also sees the experiencing of embodied and physical events as a helpful process that
aids the reception of God's Word. These two components are inseparable and both are important. ¹ To this point, it can be said that sanctified knowing, defined as the ability to grasp God's Word in the heart, is both a state and a process. ²

Sanctification Involves Knowing God's Word

On the one hand, knowing can definitely be seen as an instantaneous event involving gaining knowledge of the Word. This can be partially demonstrated by considering how a seminary student grasps the Greek language. As a student learns vocabulary, he or she immediately grasps the meaning of each word. For example, as they read κυριος, they learn that it means "Lord," and provided they understand the term, the transfer of knowledge is immediate. It is imagined that this is the same when it comes to any type of reading, and particularly with reading the Bible. Although it may take a lifetime to understand the proposition "God is love," the reasonable student of Scripture understands the propositional content immediately. Thus, knowing is an event involving understanding a proposition.

The Bible is filled with evidence of this kind of transfer. Perhaps the most famous is Abraham's belief in God's provision as detailed in Gen. 15.6 and Rom. 4.3. After God makes promises to him, Abraham simply believes them. Here is a transfer of knowledge based upon mental assent. Of course, more is going on here than simply mental assent—faith is


² No modern biblical counselor would deny that sanctification is in fact a process. The above proposition merely denotes that modern counselors understand heart change to be reducible to a firmer grasping of God's Word through the power of the Spirit, which is an instantaneous event. This is a one-time act, which although it may need to be repeated, yields the slow fruit of righteous living.
involved. Yet certainly no less than that occurs as well. Consider the production of the covenant code in Exodus 20 and following. Here the Lord simply announces His will in propositional form to his people. While obedience to the code is not guaranteed by this announcement, it is certainly very clear what God expects. A third example might be the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus communicates His will to the assembly. It is assumed that the Lord's words here are sufficient for a transfer of knowledge leading to sanctification.

The best example of the centrality of the Word in sanctification can be found from a brief word study in Acts. Here more clearly than anywhere else can it be seen that it is the propositional transfer of God's Word from one person to another that is effective in sanctification. In Acts 6.7, "the word of God continued to increase, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly . . . and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith." In 12.24, the word again increases and multiplies. In 19.20, the word "increases and prevails mightily." The Word of God, preached with apostolic authority, is effective for the ends of Christian ministry. It is most natural that the apostle Paul, a main character in Acts, would later write that it is the "sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation" and that Scripture is God-breathed and "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" so that Christians may "be . . . equipped for every good work"

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(2 Tim. 3.15-16). Clearly, sanctification appears to be contingent on the verbal and propositional communication of the Word of God.

Yet no Reformed theologian would say that sanctification comes from a simple transfer of propositional knowledge. Speaking of the relationship between the Word of God and sanctification, Berkhof notes that "the truth in itself certainly has no adequate efficiency to sanctify the believer."5 Indeed, neither the simple memorization of Bible verses nor the most rigorous studies of Scripture lead to sanctification, for the transfer of propositional truth does not cause holiness. Rather, the Word is "adapted to be the means of sanctification as employed by the Holy Spirit."6 Further, the proper function of Scripture, along with communicating the truth,7 is to provide "all the objective conditions for holy exercises and acts" as well as to promote "spiritual activity by presenting motives and inducements, and gives direction to it by prohibitions, exhortations, and examples."8 This is to say that Scripture contains more than mere propositions and doctrines, and growth in grace requires more than this as well.

One might challenge Berkhof on his conclusion that Scripture's contents are more than just truth, for objective conditions for holy acts, exhortations, and examples are all propositionally situated in the Bible. Yet his point is that Scripture affects more than just the

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6 Ibid. Sanctification is the job of the Spirit (p. 534).


mind but also the heart. This is perhaps why Jeremiah 31.33 argues that the New Covenant will include God writing His law on the hearts of believers. Reformed theologians have long made a distinction between simple propositional knowledge and heart commitment. Saving faith was divided by the Reformers into three components: notitia, assensu, and fiducia. Notitia, which is Latin for knowledge, concerns the "content of faith, the data or information to be received, understood, and embraced." As such, saving faith requires certain propositionally correct knowledge to be adequate. Second, assensu concerns itself with "intellectual assent [which] involves the assurance or conviction that a certain proposition is true." It is one thing to understand the proposition "Jesus is the Son of God" (notitia), but it requires a second step to be convicted that such a thing is true (assensu).

Third, and crucially, faith requires fiducia, which "involves not only the cognitive but the affective and volitional response." As such, fiducia represents "a positive disposition of the soul or mind to an object." Turretin is simpler: it is the act whereby "we judge the gospel to be not only true but also good." Sproul notes that Turretin adds that

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11 Sproul, Faith Alone, 76-88.

12 Ibid., 76.

13 Ibid., 78.

14 Ibid., 84.

15 Ibid., 85.

such faith is not only emotional but "volitional" as well, "drawing after it the will and beholding the gospel object and the promise of grace, not only as true . . . but also as the highest good proposed to us." True saving faith, therefore, involves cognitive assent, a positive emotional response, and a movement of the will towards the good. Scripture's job in sanctification is more than just a transfer of knowledge.

Thus the previous understanding of how knowledge of Scripture can be seen as an instantaneous transfer must be refined. Knowing as an event as it relates to sanctification is best described as follows: through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the propositions contained in Scripture are transferred into the minds and ultimately into the hearts of believers by a one-time act which includes any form of the ministry of the Word. It is in this sense that the Word of God may be understood as a proper means of grace. As one hears God's Word, both mind and heart are stirred, leading to obedience.

Sanctification Involves a Process of Embodied Acts

What has been concluded is not radical but is a typical Reformed understanding of how knowledge and the heart interact to engender obedience. It is also very similar to the cognitive understandings of sanctification which newer generations of biblical counselors advanced. Yet one may rightly ask how the believer may bridge the gap between mere

19 Not that this happens only once nor perfectly at any point, but that during a particular moment during the ministry of the Word—one sermon, or one meditation, or one counseling session—the believer cognitively grasps hold of revealed truth.
20 Defined by Berkhof as the Spirit's "use of certain means of communication of divine grace;" Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 604.
cognitive assent to God's Word and obedience. The proper answer is that this is the work of the Spirit of God.\textsuperscript{21} How does the Spirit work in this regard? Berkhof replies that:

while the Spirit can and does in some respects operate immediately on the soul of the sinner, He has seen fit to bind Himself largely to the use of certain means in the communication of divine grace.\textsuperscript{22}

It is at this point that Scripture makes room for habit in sanctification. This is because Scripture also acknowledges a second component of knowing, one which leads up to the moment of discovery\textsuperscript{23} and prepares the knower for it. Although this very biblical component of sanctification often receives little treatment, the question has not been entirely avoided by Reformed thinkers.

Sanctified Knowing as Process Involves the Whole Man

This theme receives prominent attention in the writings of the Old Princeton theologians, particularly those of A.A. Alexander and B.B. Warfield. To this point, Alexander and Warfield begin by stating that the soul of a person is unified. What they mean by this is that when dealing with the true identity of mankind, Scripture will not allow one to separate man's constituent elements, such as mind, heart, and soul, into faculties that function separate from one another. Helseth cites that Alexander opposed separating the heart from the mind because "such a 'method of philosophizing' must be repudiated . . . because it is grounded in a 'dissociation of the understanding and the heart' that cannot be justified by

\textsuperscript{21} Cf., Sproul, \textit{Faith Alone}, 83-85.

\textsuperscript{22} Berkhof, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 604.

\textsuperscript{23} An uncited quote of Michael Polyani's in Johnson, \textit{Scripture's Knowing}, 2.
experience or the teaching of Scripture." Warfield agrees, stating "that knowledge is not a function of the intellect but merely involves the whole man." Knowledge is not just an intellectual process, but involves man in all his actions. Adams agrees with this in seeing the heart and mind as being in union.  

What does Warfield mean by the 'whole man'? Apparently, he means the psychic properties of man, including the mind, heart, soul, and will. This union "does not function . . . in sections' but always acts as a single substance." This is significant because such thinking opposes popular understandings of the human person which situate the heart and mind oppositionally. Rather, with Adams, the Old Princeton theologians affirm that a separation of the constituent parts of man in the process of knowing is unbiblical. Knowing is a unified process which involves the heart.


29 Adams, More Than Redemption, 114. Adams cites an overwhelming litany of biblical texts in this regard.
Warfield makes no mention of the body in regards to the epistemological processes of the whole man. Such a position is inconsistent with his claims that the whole person should be involved in knowing but are consistent with most modern biblical counselors, and even with the position of some veteran counselors. The typical understanding is outlined by Jim Halla:

The Bible teaches that man lives out of his heart—man’s active heart is expressed in the context of many different situations. . . . Man is an inside-out person with root (motivation) and fruit (thoughts, desires, and actions). The Bible does not view man's behavior as isolated and unrelated to his inner person or situation. Rather, man is a whole person who thinks, desires, and acts in both his inner and outer man.  

Man's heart produces his actions, with the inner affecting the outer. In this sense, the body merely serves as the output mechanism of the heart. Yet is it possible that the outer affects the inner? Can embodied experiences have some impact on the epistemic process? Adams certainly thought so, for this is the main thrust of his view of habituation—that the outside affects the inside. To quote James K.A. Smith, is the body the way to the heart?  

If God truly created mankind as whole people, with the inner and outer parts of mankind in cooperative union, it is in fact possible that the change process could go both ways. If so, such an exchange would certainly be a process leading up to a discovery. Scripture indicates that this is so.

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30 Jim Halla, *Depression Through a Biblical Lens: A Whole-Person Approach* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2014), 24-25. Dr. Halla would affirm that the body is important in sanctification. This quotation does not fully capture Dr. Halla’s emphasis in this regard, but nicely characterizes the Bible’s emphasis that the heart determines embodied behavior.

Biblical Examples of Knowing as Process

How does Scripture see sanctified knowing as a process? Hebraic scholar Dru Johnson points the way forward. Johnson identifies copious evidence in both the Old and New Testaments where discoveries that could be classified as instances of knowing and trusting God's Word are made only after a process of events is completed. Two of his examples will be examined in brief to demonstrate this point.

Knowing as Process In Exodus

In the prelude to the Exodus event, the Lord speaks to Moses after Pharaoh has rejected an initial request for relief. In response, God states that He will cause Pharaoh to "send them [the Israelites] out . . . with a strong hand" (Ex. 6.1). Why will God do this? Firstly, He will do this because He is "the Lord," the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 6.2-3). Yet God says something else that Johnson claims is often overlooked in this passage; namely, that He will do this so that Israel will "know that I am the Lord your God" (Ex. 6.7).32 Although this is not the only reason God pursues judgment against Pharaoh, "knowing appears to be a part of the purpose of the plagues."33 This connection is furthered by the fact that after many of the plagues, either God or Moses reiterates that the plagues will allow Pharaoh to know God.34

Of course, Pharaoh continues to ignore the truth that God gives him at his own peril. Nonetheless, Johnson claims that "confronted by the present and persistent pattern of

32 Johnson, Scripture's Knowing, 36.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 36-7.
YHWH's actions for the sake of knowing, it should now be clear that Exodus develops a view of knowing relevant to the story. In other words, God is attempting to teach Pharaoh to acknowledge his Word through events. In Exodus, there is an interesting collusion between transferring God's Word into the heart ("you shall know that I am God") and a process of reinforcing events. Interestingly, these events both are physical and are known through the body. Pharaoh would be forced to use his senses to know God. He would see locusts, feel the hail, taste the blood, smell the livestock, and hear his son's dying breath. Clearly, sanctification in this instance involves an embodied process of interacting with God's acts in the world.

Knowing as Embodied Process in Luke

Another example of how embodied physical processes lead believers to know and trust God is found on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. This is a familiar passage in which two disciples encounter but do not recognize their Lord in the days after his resurrection. Jesus engages the two in a disputation regarding the Scriptures, attempting to prove to them that their knowledge and beliefs about the Christ were misguided (Lk. 24.25-27). Yet Johnson notes that it is not just this ministry of the Word which changes the hearts of these two believers. Rather, it is their actual physical sight of him:

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35 Ibid., 38.

36 Ibid., 63. Cf., 62.
What bridges the gap between the disciples seeing or not that Jesus’ death and resurrection are part of the kingdom of God? A ritual. Luke stays our hopes that the disciples will get it until they have arrived and are seated for a meal. Only when Jesus ritually takes the bread, blesses it, and gives it to them does the narrator relieve the tension: "And their eyes were opened and they knew him" (Luke 24.31).37

A few things are of note. First, the Spirit is always involved in the process of knowing, opening the eyes of the blind. Second, both the preached Word and an embodied experience combine to create a sanctified moment of discovery. It is interesting that it is only after Jesus broke the bread that the disciples recognized him. Was this a moment in which the Spirit simply chose to open their eyes, using no relation to the events around them? Did they simply recognize the characteristic way in which their Lord broke bread? Most likely, as the preached Word worked its way into their hearts, their physical experiences of Jesus confirmed this Word, leading to knowledge. In this passage, sanctification requires both the preached Word and an embodied process.

Knowing as Process and Habituation

Admittedly, these last two points have little explicit connection to a biblical understanding of habit. Further, before one crowns embodied experience as a pathway to knowing God that is on par with Scripture, one must acknowledge both that experience still works submissively to Scripture in these texts and that the two examples above technically recount the interactions of believers with a unique form of special revelation.38 Nonetheless,

37 Ibid.
38 In his "Introductory Volume," Berkhof cites (134-136) that special revelation is not only the written Word, but includes theophanies, communications, and miracles, by which the above mentioned examples may certainly be characterized.
it does appear obvious that the senses and the body are required in sanctification.\textsuperscript{39} Not only must the mind and heart be transformed by the power of the Word, but so too must the body be the receptacle for the experiencing of God's redeeming acts.

If this is so, it can be said that sanctification involves hearing and believing the Word of God and embodied experiences. This understanding of sanctification becomes the proper biblical context for habit, for a habit is often an influential embodied experience. So far, Scripture affirms that particular experiences change the believer, perhaps even at the heart level. What remains to be seen is how precisely this works.

CHAPTER 6
TOWARDS A BIBLICAL VIEW OF HABIT

Introduction

To this point, the following has been demonstrated. First, sanctification involves the Spirit transferring the Word of God from page to heart. This often involves some kind of propositional and cognitive transfer. Second, this process is not constituted solely of an instantaneous cognitive transfer but often involves physical experiences. What is now required is an explanation of how the mechanics of these two components interact and cooperate. The best place to do this is to examine the biblical understanding of the role of ritualized practice in the believer's life, as ritual practices happen to be very similar to habitual practices.

The Bible and Ritual

Again, Dru Johnson's work is helpful in regard to defining a ritual and how it is similar to habit. A ritual is a repeated, intentional, and scripted practice. Repetition is simple enough to understand, for this is a common element of any religiously ordained practice. For example, priest's sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was a properly repeated act, albeit repeated only once per year (Lev. 16). A ritual is also intentional. It is not something

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that occurs by happenstance, but rather by proactive initiative. Concerning this day, the Lord said "afflict yourselves and shall do no work" (Lev. 16.29). Self-affliction and ceasing from work are generally intentional activities. Third, and perhaps most importantly, rituals are scripted. Most if not all Israelite rituals follow a preconceived and directed understanding of what to do, and usually this script was delivered by a prophet.\textsuperscript{2} Simply put, the one engaging in the ritual does not come up with their own way of practicing it. In Leviticus 16, the Lord carefully prescribes the exact practices the that the people will engage in on the Day of Atonement, down to very intricate details (Lev. 16.24-16).

This is very similar to a basic understanding of a habit. By definition, a habit is repeated. A habit is usually intentional as well, although there are many examples of how habits can occur unintentionally.\textsuperscript{3} A habit is also scripted. Take the example of a person trying to develop better habits with regards to lust. They will follow a script of preconceived actions that aid them, such as avoiding certain situations or calling a wise friend. One key difference between habit and ritual, in fact the key issue with Adams' argument, is that such habits generally do not receive expressed and explicit authentication in Scripture. One may know that fighting lust by habitually avoiding certain parts of town is wise, and yet Paul nowhere commands this in the way that the Lord commanded the Day of Atonement. Nonetheless, there are great similarities between habit and ritual. Further, what is of relevance is not whether particular habits are sanctioned in Scripture, but rather whether the general practice of habit is.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 41.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
The second question that must be addressed regards the purpose of ritual. What is a ritual for and what does it do? The most intuitive answer is that a ritual is an embodied expression of a belief.⁴ For example, many Baptists believe that believer's baptism expresses a belief and commitment to Christ and functions as an outward sign of salvation. Likewise, proponents of Zwingli's view of the Lord's Supper advocate for something similar, stating that the Supper is a memorial and symbol of God's love. This being the case, "the primary goal in understanding the ritual is to decode the symbols and then the hidden world of . . . theology will be revealed to us."⁵ On this view, rituals become the "outward expression of inner thought."⁶

Johnson, following ritual theorist Catherine Bell, dissents from this view. If the above view of ritual is adopted, then along with it must be adopted an anthropology that is entirely centered on the mind.⁷ Rituals contain no significance other than that they "represent thoughts directly."⁸ There are two primary problems with this consequence. First, if this is so, why use actions at all? Words are sufficient to communicate thoughts—actions would seem to be superfluous. Second, this is not the view of the Bible, for Scripture, as previously argued, presents actions and experiences as having epistemological significance.⁹ Would God prescribe rituals in the Old and New Testament just for the purpose of symbolic participation? Calvin did not think so, as his view of the Lord's Supper demonstrates.


⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁷ Ibid. See also Idem., Knowledge by Ritual, 36.

⁸ Johnson, Knowledge by Ritual, 36.

⁹ Ibid. Cf., Johnson, Scripture's Knowing, 72.
Rather, rituals not only represent beliefs but actually effect change in the participant.\textsuperscript{10} As Johnson states, a ritual "forms the participant."\textsuperscript{11} In what ways does it do this? Johnson indicates that rituals predispose the knower to receive God's truth in a more effective manner, positing that rituals "form [the participant] to see the world differently, and only from such formations can Israelites express what they believe."\textsuperscript{12} Elsewhere in an interview he is more direct: "rituals in Scripture are a means of forming us in order to dispose us to see what God is showing us."\textsuperscript{13} This implies that there is a recognizable gap between the knower's initial state and the state of truly believing God's Word, a gap that is bridged by embodied acts.\textsuperscript{14} To summarize, rituals are sometimes\textsuperscript{15} a significant precondition for receiving God's Word, for they have the ability to prepare the knower for the reception of the Word by transforming them into a more receptive state. What remains to be seen is if the Bible substantiates this claim.

**Biblical Evidence**

Johnson lists two specific examples in the Bible of how ritual/habitual acts are meant to change the believer. The first is the Sabbath. Again in Ex. 31.13, Johnson identifies the typical formula that relates the Sabbath to knowing the Lord: "above all you shall keep my

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 70, 67.

\textsuperscript{11} Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual*, 45.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 46.


\textsuperscript{14} Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual*, 83.

\textsuperscript{15} But not all the time. God's Word is always sufficient.
Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.” Notice the dual purpose of the Sabbath. On one hand, it is a type of symbol or "sign" whereby Israel was to express their belief that God changes them. One the other, it is more than just a symbolical representation. The actual embodied experience of Sabbath is essential for Israelites to understand what God is trying to communicate. Johnson ponders whether Israel could know that God sanctifies them apart from the actual experience of Sabbath keeping, and specifically whether Israel could know this just by propositional communication. On a mere cognitive level, they certainly could have, just as modern interpreters look at the ancient practice and do the same. Yet on a deeper level, this is not possible. Johnson concludes that this is so because God could have merely stated the fact propositionally to achieve the desired result, but instead He institutes a ritual.

How does the Sabbath accomplish such a feat? It does this simply through its ordinances. In its institution, God commands Israel not to "do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns" (Dt. 5.14). Israelites did not merely symbolically rest on the Sabbath, but actually rested, staying away from their labors. Anyone familiar with the process of resting knows that such an activity actually changes the participant by giving them energy. Further, refraining from work on the Sabbath would have been a very real way of grasping that the participant's work is not effective in bringing about

16 Johnson, Knowledge by Ritual, 151.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
salvation. On the Sabbath, God commands not only a symbol, but an actual participation in rest designed to aid Israel in grasping God's glory not only cognitively, but at a deeper level.

The second example Johnson gives is the feast of Sukkot, more commonly known as the Feast of Booths. The context for this ritual is found in Leviticus 23.42-43: "all native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." During this time, Israelites would reenact scenes from the Exodus event by living in tents outside the town. Again, Johnson notes a connection between knowledge and the ritual in Lev. 23.43 ("that your generations may know"), which Johnson identifies as presenting a similar dilemma: "why can the generations not know that 'Israel lived in booths' merely by telling them?" One consequence of the ritual's existence is to demonstrate that mere propositional knowledge does not bridge the "logical gap" in Israel's knowledge. Instead, the "gap is breached by scripted participation" and "habit."21

Johnson's argument is compelling. If God wanted, He could have simply communicated information propositionally to His people, as He does in other places. Yet God chooses not to do this, instead prescribing an embodied habitual practice for this same purpose. Both of the above listed examples provide evidence that habit and ritual serve a major purpose in the knowing process. If this is true, then two questions are immediately posed. First, why is ritual necessary in the knowing process? Second, how does it work?

19 Ibid., 152.
20 Ibid., 153.
21 Ibid., 153-154.
The Necessity of Ritual

Ritual is necessary because humans are embodied beings. One can first argue from man's nature to the requirement of habit. As James K. A. Smith put it already, humans are more than merely propositional beings or brains-on-a-stick. As the Old Princeton theologians put it, the constituent elements of the human person, presumably including the body, are not separable when it comes to the daily processes of living. Man's heart, mind, spirit, will, and body are all connected. Therefore, the body is important in the knowing process. Yet modern counselors have been too quick to characterize the body as the output function of the human mind. Such a view flirts with Platonism by prioritizing the cognitive too highly above the body. Rather, a biblical view of the whole man sees the body as an essential part of man's being. Therefore, a way of embodied knowing—i.e. ritual and habit—is implied.

Further, it can be argued that because man is this way, habit is tacitly assumed by Scripture to be a valid method of change. The existence of many prescribed rituals throughout Scripture shows that one way in which humans learn is through physical actions. If God prescribes rituals and habits, then this says something significant about the way in which humans know things. If, as has already been demonstrated, ritualized habits exist in

\[\text{References:}\]


23 Johnson traces this back to the Alexandrian school and to Greek thinking in general, which is not representative of how the Bible views man; see Johnson, Knowledge By Ritual (93-99).

24 Cf., Ibid., 151-154. Elsewhere Johnson makes this case more carefully by arguing that the processes described in biblical rituals are compatible with ways of knowing in other fields of life, particularly in science. Consider also Adams' own words: "God has made the same man who 'develops' a tennis serve by repetition able to learn many other things that way. Why should we not expect Him to help people learn how to live according to the Scriptures in a similar fashion?" See Johnson, Scripture's Knowing, 85-98; and Jay E. Adams, "What Alternative?," in Heath Lambert, The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 167.
order to advance something more than propositional knowledge, then there exists a capacity in humans for this kind of knowledge. As Johnson summarizes, "we are not merely thinkers who act, but our thinking is shaped by our action and our acts are types of thinking."\(^{25}\)

The Mechanics of Habit

On this point the Scriptures are admittedly silent. This is not necessarily a troubling fact, for Scripture is not exhaustive in regard to human knowledge, but only contains that which is profitable for godliness. One the one hand, there is wisdom in remaining silent where Scripture is silent. On the other, perhaps a discerning use of common grace resources can be helpful in this regard. First, a better explanation of how habit works is required in order to displace Adams' view. Second, a better understanding of how habit works will allow one to understand how habit and the Word interact. Two divergent and yet similar common grace explanations for how this process might function are of interest. The first is a philosophical explanation, while the second is a scientific one.

Cyborgic Extension and Analogical Reasoning: Philosophical Constructs

The first common grace explanation is the concept of cyborgic extension, proposed initially by mid-century philosopher of science Michael Polyani and developed further by his followers.\(^{26}\) In this concept, physical objects in the world form a kind of psycho-physical

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 99.

union with their human operator. As Johnson explains, an object in use "no longer is an object to us, but part of us."27 This is best understood through use of an example. Consider picking up a pencil and using it to write.28 After having done this for a while, it can be said that the pencil has become part of the user, or that the mind treats it as a part of itself. More philosophically, when man does this he is "extending some human capability into a non-human object."29 Through the use of a tool, the body not only has gained a new capability (i.e. writing) but now feels subjectively as if it is extending itself. Simply put, mankind engages in the "practice of assimilating a tool as if it were an extension of our own bodies."30

To demonstrate that this explanation is not philosophical nonsense, it can be said that Adams came up with a similar explanation. Recall Adams' discussion of practicing habits to the extent that driving a car becomes natural.31 Any driver will know that after continued driving in the same car, one gets a real sense of the capabilities, shape, feel, and speed of the car so that driving in complex situations becomes an unnoticed activity.32 In these sorts of instances, it is properly said that "we no longer think about it, but rather think in or through it."33 As Andy Clark says, when one's body is acting in this way with regards to physical

27 Johnson, Knowledge by Ritual, 100.
28 This example is taken from Clark, Cyborgs, 29; quoted in Johnson, Knowledge By Ritual, 99-101.
29 Johnson, Knowledge by Ritual, 99-100.
30 Ibid., 100.
31 p. 11, 30.
32 Cf., Meek, Contact With Reality, 36.
33 Ibid.
objects in its use, this "ultimately blurs the line between the intelligent system and its best tools for thought and action."\(^{34}\) Mind, body, and object form a kind of internal union.

How then would this process, if true, affect a person's cognitive processes and their heart? Johnson proposes that this is through the form of analogical reasoning. Simply defined, analogical reasoning involves an analogy and an argument:

An *analogy* is a comparison between two objects, or systems of objects, that highlights respects in which they are thought to be similar. *Analogical reasoning* is any type of thinking that relies upon an analogy. An *analogue argument* is an explicit representation of a form of analogical reasoning that cites accepted similarities between two systems to support the conclusion that some further similarity exists.\(^{35}\)

For example, one might say something to the effect of "'Judy's career path is taking off.'"\(^{36}\) In this case, one would need to have experience of something taking off to truly understand this statement.\(^{37}\)

Note three things. First, analogical reasoning is implicit reasoning. One could simply say that Judy's career is going well, but the use of analogy makes the statement more accessible. Second, analogical reasoning is often a form of inductive reasoning, "since . . . conclusions do not follow with certainty but are only supported with varying degrees of strength."\(^{38}\) Third, analogical reasoning requires embodied experience. Johnson asks the

\(^{34}\) Clark, *Cyborgs*, 29; quoted in Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual*, 101. Recall the previous discussion regarding Adams' view that object and participant form a kind of union (p. 12).


\(^{37}\) Ibid. *Cf.*, Ibid., 51.

\(^{38}\) Bartha, "Analogy," *SEP.*
reader to "try to describe anything without tugging upon someone's ability to apply their experience analogically to the terms and conditions."\(^{39}\) Doing so is difficult.

How does analogical reasoning inform the knower? Johnson points towards the rational structure inherent in ritual, asking whether "embodied actions reason with the participant?"\(^{40}\) Quite simply, experience speaks to the believer. Johnson recommends at least three methods. Sometimes experience provides the knower with mere images or experiences that show them how things work. For example, when ones thinks of propositional logical necessity, one may often think of their own experiences of being compelled in life in order to provide context for their understanding.\(^{41}\) Other times it provides one with various divergent experiences which create "an argument, a set of tensions" for the knower to explore.\(^{42}\) For example, Mary Douglas argues that the releasing of the scapegoat and the birds in the Day of Atonement rituals figured in Lev. 14.14-16 set up differences between the two animals which are meant to be interpreted differently.\(^{43}\) Finally, analogical reasoning can actually induce the desired change itself. Catherine Bell comments that:

Required kneeling does not merely communicate subordination to the kneeler. For all intents and purposes, kneeling produces a subordinated kneeler in and through the act itself. . . . Rather, we see an act of production—the production of a ritualized agent


\(^{40}\) Ibid., 50.


able to wield physically a scheme of subordination or insubordination.\textsuperscript{44}

In summation, Johnson claims embodied experience is required in order to understand propositional truth. It is not necessarily that embodied actions such as habits give believers propositional knowledge; rather, they change believers so that they can better receive propositional knowledge.\textsuperscript{45} When humans interact with the physical world, they often form a kind of psychic union with the physical objects with which we engage. In turn, this physical union affects them epistemologically. By engaging with the real world, the body analogically learns information about the world around it, which is often necessary to understand phrases, words, and propositions. The Bible affirms this view with regards to ritual, for this is the purpose of a ritual: to aid on in knowing. One can reasonably assume that this truth applies to habituation as well, for habits are merely self-instituted rituals.

**Neurological Argument: Scientific Constructs**

Scientific research also provides its own understanding of how habit functions. The generally accepted explanation goes something like the following. As a human repeats an action, associations in the brain develop between the action and involved neural circuitry. As the action is repeated, the associated brain circuitry grows stronger and stronger. Ultimately, the participant reaches a point where the neural circuitry becomes so strong that the desired action happens very readily.\textsuperscript{46} It has formed into what we call a habit. Instead of having to consciously think about what one is doing, one can use much less "mental energy" than

\textsuperscript{44} Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 100; quoted in Johnson, *Knowledge By Ritual*, 111.

\textsuperscript{45} "The goal then is not a body of knowledge, so to speak, but ritualized bodies—agents who are disposed to interpret" (Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual*, 112).

\textsuperscript{46} Recall the description of Mowrer’s understanding of how behavioral interventions work (p. 26-28).
previously required for the same task. Connections have been made and improved in a person's brain.

This process can be illustrated through the following example:

Studies of American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, meanwhile, suggest that some soldiers are much better than others at scanning a scene and detecting tiny clues—an out-of-place rock, and odd-looking pile of garbage—where there might be a roadside bomb in the area. Sgt. First Class Edward Tierney does not understand how he knew that a certain car contained a bomb and decided to take the evasive action that saved his life. "My body suddenly got cooler; you know, that danger feeling," he told Benedict Carey of The New York Times.

Sgt. Tierney may not understand how he recognized the bomb, but perhaps we may. On the one hand, Sgt. Tierney most certainly received didactic and propositional training regarding detecting roadside bombs. Such training would have cognitively taught him to know that misplaced items or abandoned cars might be areas of danger. Yet Sgt. Tierney also experienced many similar situations leading up to this moment. Brooks contends that one's brain is constantly working during all situations, making connections, gathering knowledge, and assessing perspectives. Apparently during these prior embodied situations, Sgt. Tierney associated certain sensations with the stimuli of danger. In the right situation, his body reacted before his mind. In fact, he actually felt the danger.

47 Terry Gross, "Habits: How They Form and How To Break Them," Fresh Air, podcast transcript, aired 5 March 2012; available from https://www.npr.org/2012/03/05/147192599/habits-how-they-form-and-how-to-break-them; Internet; accessed 1 December 2017.


49 Ibid., 241-242.

50 Cf., Ibid., 235-245.

51 Ibid., 48.
Yet what role does science envision propositional knowledge playing in this process? At some point, the subliminal sensory experience of a misplaced rock was associated with the proposition "danger exists." Therefore, it can be said that through a series of embodied habitual experiences, the mind associates certain stimuli with certain propositions and directs actions accordingly. Habitual action actually changes one's mind and body. In so doing, it allows one to grasp certain truths more deeply.

**Synthesis**

With this in mind, one can now understand exactly what the Bible understands habit to do. First, habit and ritual do not provide one with the propositional content of the Word of God. As Johnson says, rituals do not aim at providing one with a "body of knowledge." Although Scripture sees certain practices as heuristic, it also sees them as more than that. Instead of giving knowledge, embodied experience actually changes the participant, both mentally and physically. It does this both through analogical reasoning and by producing "ritualized bodies—agents who are disposed to interpret." This contention converges nicely with the scientific evidence. When practiced consistently, actions technically change one's neural pathways. As Catherine Bell says, an event of this kind "primarily acts to restructure bodies in the very doing of the acts themselves."

What does this mean? It means firstly that the practice of habit can actually physically change the participant. Habituation can change the brain, which in turn creates a different


53 Ibid.

disposition in a believer. Second, the Bible sees habit as performing a specialized epistemological process. Having changed one's neural pathways, habituation now allows certain thoughts, actions, and feelings to occur more or less frequently. Thusly, the changed knower gains a new vantage point regarding propositional knowledge. Specifically, the habituated knower can receive and enact God's Word more efficiently. The believer understands words and propositions initially with the mind, but knows them more fully through embodied experiences. This is to say that, as habits change the participant, they change into people who are able to grasp propositions more certainly. In this sense, habits are the handmaidens of cognitive knowledge.

Distinguishing This Position

Yet this conclusion leaves one with more questions that must be answered. First, this position must be more clearly distinguished from those of Adams and the newer generations. Adams saw habit not as a purely physical phenomenon with no bearing on epistemological processes but rather as a physical tool for dealing with the physical remnants of sin left in the body. Adams is right to both see habit as an embodied process and to emphasize the body's importance in sanctification. He diverges from the stated view on two points. First, he sees no epistemological function for habit. Habit does not allow one to know better, nor does it play a role in knowing God's Word. Second, he makes unsound exegetical moves regarding the proper understanding of the flesh and of sin in the body.

Yet newer generations have not yet developed a proper emphasis on habit. They infrequently prescribe and rarely make arguments for it. Further, they do not often consider the body's role in sanctification. The mind is seen as the primary way to the heart, and the
mind simply interprets experiences as if they represent propositions. Further, they see the heart as the primary actor in sanctification, particularly as the receptor of God's Word, which then motivates the believer to act well through the body. In one sense this position is correct, but in another it fails to give proper credence to how the body might have an effect on knowing and doing.

In the end, it appears the Hegel's dialectic is helpful in understanding how habit works in counseling. Adams set forth the initial thesis that sanctification was a largely physical process. The second generations responded that it is a cognitive process, shrouding this in the language of the heart. The proper biblical understanding, however, is somewhere in the middle. Habituation does physically change the body, but only in order so that the Word of God may be received and acted upon more efficiently. Habit is a physical process that influences cognitive knowing.

What About Sola Scriptura?

It must also be asked whether the stated view of habit challenges the traditional doctrine of sola scriptura. The answer to this is a resolute no. Habits and experiences do not supersede or contend with God's Word in the Bible. Experiences do not communicate knowledge in a way that is superior to or separate from the Bible, nor is habit something that is necessary for Scripture to be received in the heart or interpreted aright. Rather, habits simply create a better knower. In this way, the proper biblical understanding of habituation only reinforces and corresponds with God's Word as the primary means of sanctification.
Habits and the Heart

Finally, it must be asked whether habits can change the heart. The answer to this is both positive and negative. Positively, since mind, heart, and body are all connected biblically, a change in one should cause a change in the other. For example, a heart change will create bodily changes, particularly in regards to the performance of righteous actions. Likewise, the consistent practice of righteous habits will actually change the mind. As the mind and heart are in union, a change in mind can represent a change in the heart.

Yet in another sense habits do not automatically affect the heart. One can imagine a situation in which a person practices good habits, changes the physical and cognitive structure of their brains, and still experiences no heart change. The Pharisees were perhaps the most successful practitioners of habit the world has ever known, and they still were often far from the kingdom of God. And what of the highly ritualized Israelites who still fell into apostasy? Therefore, what is required for sanctification is more than just habituation.

The biblical balance is highly nuanced. Habits can affect the mind, and as the mind is part of the heart, it can be said that habits affect the heart. Yet as the mind is only one part of the heart, it is too ambitious to say that habits take a central role in changing the heart. Ultimately, it is the Spirit that changes hearts, and He may use whatever means He pleases. Habituation is not a panacea, and while it can affect changes even in non-believers, the work of the Spirit must accompany habit if it is to be effective.

Conclusion

We can establish the true biblical understanding of habit only after seeing that Scripture mandates embodied repetitive acts as a part of the knowing and sanctification
process. The paradigm for such acts are the copious biblical rituals prescribed throughout God's Word. More than simply representing beliefs or functioning as markers under certain covenants, the existence of these rituals means that God designed humanity to know, learn, and change not only through cognitive methods but through physical actions and experiences as well. This fact alone, with its various anthropological implications, commends the practice of habits to all believers. Once practiced, these habits have a real and formational effect on the human mind and body in their ability to change brain circuitry and encourage certain actions over others. While only God can change the heart through the ministry of the Word, the sum effect of practicing biblical habits is to change the believer in such a way that the Word of God is assimilated, trusted, and practiced in the heart, mind, soul, and body of a believer in more efficient and certain manner.
CHAPTER 7
APPLICATION

Introduction

Given this understanding of biblical habit, two tasks remain. First, an effort must be made to envision how habituation can be reintegrated into existing counseling models. Put differently, how should biblical counselors use and recommend habituation while counseling? Second, if this is true, then the resultant model needs to be compared with existing integrationist models in order to differentiate it from them.

Implementing Habituation

Before proceeding, a few important distinctions must be made. When imagining how habits should be used in counseling, one can distinguish between intensity, timing, and modality. Intensity is related to the balance between cognitive and embodied interventions in counseling. Timing refers to the discernment of the moment in the counseling process and at what points habit would be most effective. Modality refers to the various types of habits which would be appropriate to prescribe.

Intensity

Two things can be said regarding the proper intensity of habit in biblical counseling. First, as has been already demonstrated, habit is the handmaiden of cognitive interventions.
Therefore, cognitive interventions will always remain primary in the counseling enterprise. The main task of the biblical counselor will always be to faithfully administer the Word of God to the counselee in a way consistent with the principle of truth in love. This will mean a use of the Bible, implicitly and explicitly, that will both inform how the counselor does counseling and that will inform the counselee of the wonder of God's truth. Habits take a backseat to this in counseling, but yet still must be present.

Second, the intensity of habituation may need to vary depending on certain situations. For example, certain counselees may require more or less habituation depending on their personal situation. A believer looking for help in making wise decisions may require less habitual interventions than a believer struggling with alcohol abuse. In the first example, an exploration of presuppositions regarding decision making, the person's heart condition, and biblical instruction may be appropriate. In the second, an attention to the person's heart and biblical instruction will be imperative, yet they will also require more habitual work than the other person. The biblical counselor will have to employ their discretion in this regard.

In relation to the counselor's discretion is the counselor's theoretical orientation. As has already been belabored, biblical counselors tend to fall into orientations either favoring Adams' approach or the Powlison-Welch-Pierre approach. While a diversity of approaches can only be a benefit to the movement at large, each orientation may need to alter their use of habit in different ways. Since Adams' orientation tends to heavily emphasize habit, practitioners with orientations closer to his will need to consider tempering their use of habituation. Likewise, those counselors more familiar with the newer approach may need to make more room habituation in their counseling. So doing will require both sides to examine their counseling methods for ways in which they are out of alignment with Scripture.
Timing

Two things can be said with regards to the timing of the implementation of habituation in biblical counseling. First, consider the following diagram of how the moment of discovery in counseling might be perceived.¹

![Diagram](U->Habits->Understanding->Habits->Certainty)

Figure 7.1: The Knowing Process

The diagram denotes three distinct points along the knowing continuum. First, there is a state of unknowing, which is a typical place to be before acquiring a fact. Johnson describes this as "being insensitive-to-something's presence."² Through the use of habits (and other methods left out for simplicity's sake) the knower begins to grasp the proposition in hand, leading to the understanding stage. This is a moment of initial discovery, which Johnson characterizes as a "eureka" moment.³ Such a moment is akin to a first grasping of a biblical truth. At this point, one may basically understand the truth without fully trusting in it. The final stage is

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² Johnson, *Knowledge By Ritual*, 78.
³ Ibid., 78, 85-86.
when the proposition becomes certain to the knower.\textsuperscript{4} Instead of simply knowing that God will provide, the believer trusts in this with their heart.\textsuperscript{5} Habit can be utilized at two different points on this continuum: either before or after the moment of initial understanding.\textsuperscript{6} A biblical case has already been made for the use of habit before this moment, as it has been demonstrated that the Bible often prescribes a ritual or scripted process in order for someone to see a Biblical truth. Therefore, the biblical counselor should do this as well. For example, if the counselee needs to grasp the truth that God will provide, then instructing them to participate in habits that correspond with this, even if they do not yet see or feel this to be true, will be helpful. Indeed, this was Adams' \textit{modus operandi} in many situations.

Habits should also be prescribed after this initial moment of understanding as well. Let one presume that the counselee cognitively assents to the truth that God will provide for their physical needs. They can further explore, know, and gain more certainty regarding this by practicing habits that will actually induce this experience. This is to say that habituation has a reinforcing effect.\textsuperscript{7} For example, the counselee might, trusting that God will provide, engage in healthy habits of biblical obedience regarding money. As they do so, their belief in God's provision will be further confirmed through an experience of God's faithfulness. This

\textsuperscript{4} I differ with Johnson on this last stage. He calls it "discernment," by which he indicates that the knower has gained "mastery" over their subject (Ibid., 78, 86).

\textsuperscript{5} John Frame calls this "cognitive rest"; see John Frame, in \textit{The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God} (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 152-153.

\textsuperscript{6} Johnson notes that habit is essential at all points; see Johnson, \textit{Knowledge by Ritual}, 81-87.

\textsuperscript{7} p. 84-5.
use of habit converges with common grace scientific understanding of how the mind works.

The astute practitioner can reinforce already established beliefs and actions through a process of habitual conditioning. Therefore, biblical counselors should encourage their charges to practice appropriate habits even after they appear to understand God's Word.

**Modality**

The question of modality of habits refers to discerning what kinds of habits are to be used. It also concerns itself with what kinds of habits are available for selection in this regard. There are two modes of habits to consider: divinely ordained habits and those that do not receive authentication in Scripture but may be practiced in Christian liberty.

**Divinely Ordained Habits**

Scripture does sanction the repetitive use of certain habits as a means of sanctification. Of these habits, there are three categories. The first is the ministry of the Word (Col. 3.16). This includes the habitual reception and submission to the Bible in any proper way it is mediated, such as the preaching and teaching of God's Word (2 Tim. 4.2), presumably by a sanctioned minister (1 Tim. 3.2). Listening to preaching, after all, is a kind of habit which is to be practiced at least once per week. Of course, habitual listening to God's Word also includes private meditation on Scripture and counseling.

The second category involves the sacraments. Properly, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are New Covenant rituals. As such, the biblical view of rituals applies

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8 p. 84-5.

to them as well. While considerable debate regarding the meaning and mode of the sacraments exists within the evangelical community, what is not in question is that these two rites are scripted and repetitive practices that receive divine sanction (Acts 2.38, 1 Cor. 11.24). Regardless of what they do mean, the sacraments remain habitual. As such, it is essential for the biblical counselor to encourage their counselees to be baptized, be present at the baptisms of others, baptize their own children, and participate in the Lord's Supper as often as possible, for special graces are available at these events.

A third type of divinely ordained habit includes the generic prescription of repetitive righteous activities in Scripture. Recall both 2 Tim. 3.16, where Scripture is seen as sufficient for "training in righteousness" and Hebrews 5.14, where the author encourages believers to have their "discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish between good and evil." As has previously been argued, these verses do mandate the practice of habits in some regard.\textsuperscript{10} Yet such language is seemingly lacking in specificity. In essence, the passages leave the reader to generate practices that concord with this principle. This is not an impossible task, for Scripture is very clear regarding what righteousness entails. Such practices likely include biblically sanctioned acts such as visiting orphans and widows, giving to the poor and the saints, evangelism, mercy ministries, and prayer, among others. Such actions were always meant to be practiced repetitively. This paper simply contends that so doing affects the believer epistemically.

\textsuperscript{10} p.13-14.
Biblically Non-Sanctioned Habits

The second category, and perhaps the most contentious one, concerns the practice of habits which are not specifically spelled out in Scripture. Examples of these might include anything from making a habit of avoiding the liquor store on one's way home to practicing systematic desensitization in order to treat a phobia. The first example is in good biblical company, since it might readily be seen as an extension of the Matt. 5.29 principle. Anything that aids in growing righteousness, including practicing good habits, are welcome avenues to the Christian. As Jesus said, "the one who is not against you is for you" (Lk. 9.50). This gives the Christian considerable latitude to develop good habits in submission to the goal of righteousness.

What of the second example and of others like it? Systematic desensitization is a popular secular method for treating phobias that has achieved empirical success.\(^\text{11}\) In this method, the counselee is slowly exposed to a threatening object or event, beginning with simple imagining and then moving up a hierarchy of exposure until they can withstand the initial fear. For example, a person with a fear of snakes might first be instructed to imagine a snake, and then to go to the zoo, and then to finally hold a snake. What occurs during this process can be described as repetitive, scripted, and intentional, just as in habituation. Yet it seems difficult to properly call such practices habits. This is because secular behavioral methods like systematic desensitization, paradoxical intention, and classical conditioning all include a manipulation by the practitioner of the main working mechanisms of habituation

applied to the passive patient. These practices still involve the same process as habituation, but are pointed by secular counselors at very specific ends.

At this point a very difficult question is encountered; namely, should the biblical counselor utilize these types of interventions? In one sense, Scripture ordains no such thing. In another, they do appear to be consonant with a biblical anthropology and epistemology. Christians and non-Christians alike do tend to learn by these methods and can grasp more firmly the proposition "non-venomous snakes will not kill me" after having had habitual experiences that confirm this. Further, Adams advocated for precisely these kinds of interventions, although he would not refer to them by their secular names. When Adams called for the counselee to continue their daily duties in the midst of depression, he had specifically in mind the mitigation of guilt feelings. But what if this is not the only thing such interventions can accomplish? It is possible that, as a depressed Christian habitually continues their daily duties, such habitual practices teach him or her other truths as well. Perhaps they teach him or her that their actions are meaningful, that they can help and affect others, or that they are not failures in God's eyes.

The resolution to this question lies in not seeing the Bible as advocating for specific secular treatments but rather for the general assertion that the Christian often can engage in bodily experiences in order to achieve sanctification. Simply put, habituation is a behavioral technique, but this does not mean that all behavioral techniques are appropriate for the biblical counselor's use. The Bible does not properly advocate for desensitization or conditioning, and these specific techniques are often so tainted with secular presuppositions that avoiding them may be the best course of option. Yet this does not get the biblical

counselor off the hook from coupling their biblical content with the prescription of habitual practices. Utilization of habituation does not open the door to full-blown behaviorism, but it should make the counselor more aware of how the body interacts in counseling. Therefore, in some cases, the biblical counselor may prescribe practices that are formally similar to behavioral techniques while maintaining a core biblical direction.13

Engaging Other Counseling Modalities

At this point the second question naturally arises; namely, how should biblical counselors engage with practitioners of other evangelical psychotherapies regarding the implementation of embodied techniques? This question has never been more important, as the current historical moment finds the relationship between the two at a nadir.14 Fortunately, the proper biblical understanding of habituation offers new options for dialogue between the two groups.

Acknowledging Integrationists' Achievements

It is evident that biblical counseling as currently realized lacks balance regarding cognitive and embodied interventions. What has not yet been established is that integrationists have presented a more biblical doctrine of habit than many biblical counselors

13 Briefly consider the example of Jesus and the woman at the well in John 4. Before even speaking to her, Jesus has attempted to provide her with a radically oppositional experience to those in her normal life (a Jewish man speaking kindly with a Samaritan woman). After this, she is much more receptive to Jesus' truthful confrontation. Perhaps this is why the Bible prescribes a "truth in love" format for biblical confrontation. Indeed, the practice of righteousness towards unbelievers so often mandated by the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2.24-26; 1 Pt. 3.1) may aim at precisely the processes described in this paper.

have. Influential integrationists such as Mark McMinn, Clark Campbell, and Larry Crabb all affirm that behavioral interventions are sometimes necessary in counseling.\(^\text{15}\) Certainly the employment of such interventions may not always be biblical, but at least thinkers such as these see the body as important in counseling. Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, integrationist stalwarts in their own right, devote a full page of praise to Adams' model of habituation in their influential *Modern Psychotherapies* textbook.\(^\text{16}\) Likewise, Crabb finds nouthetic counselors' directions concerning fostering obedience highly helpful.\(^\text{17}\) Stanton and Jones' argument in favor of habit is simple and straightforward: "a Christian view of persons will recognize the place of habit in human life, and behavior modification certainly does this."\(^\text{18}\) For integrationists, it is anthropology which determines counseling modality.\(^\text{19}\)

Thankfully, these thinkers have recognized the importance of the body. Such language should not be lost on biblical counselors. It is the integrationists who have emphasized habituation while modern biblical counselors have been less vocal. More importantly, integrationists are willing to support Adams and the first generation on this point. Agreement among integrationists and biblical counselors on matters like this are rare, and areas of rapprochement such as this should be examined. Further, biblical counselors


\(^{17}\) Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 151.

\(^{18}\) Stanton and Jones, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 164. This is also the main argument of this thesis.

\(^{19}\) Integrationists tend to rely heavily on the creation doctrine of dominion in this regard; see McMinn and Campbell, *Integrative*, 185; and Stanton and Jones, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 163.
may have much to learn from their integrationist counterparts about the importance of habituation.

**Challenging Integrationists' Integration**

The biblical counselor can also challenge the integrationist regarding habituation, for rightly understood, the doctrine of habit presented here undermines any need to integrate. The argument is simple. Too often, integrationists reach out to secular thought systems to support their contentions about embodied interventions. McMinn offers a number of secular interventions that he uses, including "relaxation training, breathing training, various exposure techniques, daily event planning, assertiveness training." Elsewhere, he prescribes an activity schedule based upon Aaron Beck's work. Some above-mentioned interventions approximate habituation more than others, yet they all share a secular origin.

Integrationists usually justify their use of habituation by referring to the biblical doctrine of dominion. Consider McMinn and Campbell's explanation:

Consistent with Christian theology's functionalist views of the *imago Dei* . . . humans are considered to have a unique capacity to manage, even exercise, dominion over parts of creation. Sometimes these abilities to manage creation need to be self-directed in order to bring one's own behavior and life situations under control. The need for self control, and techniques to accomplish it, are part of a long and rich tradition in both Christianity and psychology.

Since mankind is made in God's image, man has the power to utilize their surroundings to help them. This statement alone is not controversial. Yet McMinn and Campbell go further

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20 McMinn and Campbell, *Integrative*, 180, Figure 6.2.

21 Ibid., 282-283.


than this in asserting that, since this is so, secular psychology therefore "share[s] important similarities" with the Christian view of dominion. Given that, as already stated, McMinn and Campbell go on to borrow from Beck and behaviorism, it must be assumed that the use of secular thinking holds an important place in their work.

It is on this point that biblical counselors have a unique opportunity for dialogue with integrationists regarding habituation. As this work has alleged, the need for habit in counseling can be established via recourse to Scripture. Biblical counselors will agree with this statement, as will the integrationists mentioned above. If this is so, why would one need to go outside of Scripture in order to gain knowledge regarding habituation in counseling? Biblical counselors can gently call their brothers' and sisters' attention to this point by pointing to the riches that Scripture provides for the counseling task. Integrationists no longer need to scour the works of Beck or Skinner in order to produce a justification for habituation. The Word of God provides a much better one. Biblical counselors would do well to point this out to their integrationist colleagues. In this sense, habituation is actually a key concept in perpetuating dialogue between various evangelical counseling modalities, for each side has something to learn from the other.

24 Ibid., 30.
CHAPTER 8
MOVING FORWARD

Habits are little things with big consequences. Most often, these consequences are personal. They affect one's body, mind, and actions. As has been demonstrated, the abstract concept of habituation itself also has major philosophical consequences. Thinkers as diverse as Aristotle, Jay Adams, and Michael Polyani have differed on how habituation should be understood in the process of knowledge acquisition and change. These differences have major consequences in how one understands sanctification. These differences have also sharply divided the biblical counseling community. Such a division requires rectification.

In the quest for unity, the first task was to examine Adams' initial thesis. Adams saw habits as an essential target of counseling interventions. Envisioning sin as something physically remaining in the flesh after conversion, he advocated for the consistent practice of righteous habits as a natural means of training the body to eradicate the remaining sin in the flesh. Seeing the body as a key ingredient in sanctification, Adams urged his charges to consistently do right as a way of changing thoughts and feelings in accordance with the Bible. Although attractive, Adams' system had important flaws, chief of which was an imperfect exegesis of the relevant texts and the resulting adoption of a questionable anthropology. Adams was right to point out that the body is important in sanctification, but prescribed a deficient view of habituation based upon a deficient theology.
Responding to these flaws, subsequent counselors identified a third problem: Adams' failure to fully develop a theory of motivation consonant with a biblical understanding of the human person. Visionaries like Welch, Powlison, and Tripp rectified this wrong, pointing appropriately to the heart as the main actor in sanctification. To the extent that they did so, newer counselors brought the movement more in alignment with biblical values. Yet there were shortcomings to this approach as well, for the newer generations instigated a revolution in biblical counseling which saw cognitive based interventions eclipse habitual ones. Such a change was also based on an imperfect anthropology that saw the body as a secondary component in sanctification. What was needed as a biblical balance between the two poles.

The Scriptures provide such a balance. Scripture agrees with the newer generations in confirming that the Word of God empowered by the Spirit is the main agent in sanctification, demonstrating that cognitive interventions are indicated. These interventions do not simply involve the transfer of propositional knowledge, but transpose that knowledge through the power of the Spirit and apply it to the heart. Yet the Bible will not leave the matter there, defining sanctification, and specifically the moments leading up to the grasping of God's Word, as a process which often involves experiences, events, and habits. Only after experiencing plagues or walking with Christ could one come to believe the Word of God.

This contention, often overlooked in modern evangelicalism, is essential to establishing a biblical doctrine of habituation. If the Bible sees physical experiences as an important component of sanctified knowing, then a justification of habits is possible. The Bible's best analogue to the practice of habits is found in its prescription of rituals in the Old and New Covenants. Rituals, which are scripted, repetitive, and intentional acts, mirror the same processes as habits, which are also scripted, repetitive, and intentional acts. An
examination of the Bible's view of ritual practice yields two very important conclusions. First, it shows that rituals are more than symbolic representations of cognitive beliefs, but are actually aimed at teaching and transforming the participant. Second, if this is so, then embodied practices such as habit are legitimized in sanctification. This indicates that God has created mankind not as solely cognitive creatures, but as physical ones as well.

If this is so, then how does such a process work? Simply put, habituation changes the participant. That this is so was assumed by Adams and is confirmed by scientific evidence. Although some have offered various philosophical understandings of how this works, the simplest explanation is still the best. As believers practice good habits, their bodies and minds are changed. Perhaps going through a particular experience helps them to better grasp a biblical concept. Perhaps through a process of habituation, neural pathways are changed, making obedience easier. At any rate, habituation so changes the believer physically and mentally that they become more competent receptors of God's Word. Such a view does not threaten sola scriptura, but actually confirms it, for habituation does not compete with God's ordained means of grace but actually cooperates with them as an ancillary process.

Modern biblical counselors must therefore incorporate the science and the exegesis supporting habituation into their practice. How should they therefore integrate it? Counselors must consider appropriate intensity, timing, and modality. Counselors must carefully select appropriate habits and may choose from a variety of divinely ordained and non-sanctioned habits as wisdom allows. Counselors must also walk a fine line between full acceptance of secular constructions of habituation and complete rejection of them.

This being done, the biblical counseling movement will be greatly advanced. For one, it will have reclaimed its birthright—a biblical understanding of embodied practice. Second,
biblical counselors will be able to converse with integrationists who have already gone where biblical counselors should have while calling them to see that no need for integration of secular resources properly exists. As biblical counselors correct this error, we may hope for increased unity in among God's people regarding the care of souls.
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