

CHANGES THAT HURT

A Critique of
Changes That Heal,
by Dr. Henry Cloud

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CHANGES THAT HURT **A Critique of *Changes That Heal*, by Dr. Henry Cloud**

This book, by popular "Christian psychologist" Henry Cloud, incorporates many of the concepts found in *Boundaries*, which Cloud co-authored with John Townsend, and *Hiding From Love*, authored solely by Townsend. Separate critiques of each of these other books are available from Discernment Publications. This current paper is written in response to concern over Campus Crusade for Christ's extensive use of *Changes That Heal*.

Cloud's acknowledgments specifically include Campus Crusade for Christ:

"It was under their original request that this material was developed and envisioned." (x)

It is unfortunate to note the intrusion of psychotherapy into organizations originally formed to spread the gospel. The fruit of modern psychology is changes that *hurt*, not changes that "heal."

Cloud's Commitment to Psychology

In the preface, Cloud begins by noting the large number of Christians suffering from emotional problems, as seen in his counseling room: "The church is split on how to deal with these hurting people" (xii). Some, he claims, see these hurting people as being "in sin" and blame them for their problems, much like Job's friends (xii):

"Faced with this kind of help, sufferers either learn to fake healing to remain in the church, or leave the church, deciding that their faith provides little solace for their emotional pain." (xiii)

On the other side of the issue, many turn to psychology, and their method seems to provide relief (xiii). However, Cloud asks:

"Was it God or psychology that provided the cure? They know that the relief is from God, but there seems to be no biblical system by which to defend it. They just know that 'it works.'" (xiii)

Such pragmatism ("it works") is typical of the psychological way. Along with it we often find a lack of concern for biblical doctrine. The intellect is cast aside as irrelevant, while the

emotions are exalted. Whenever something seems to "work," we need to ask serious questions. What was the original *goal*? Was it a biblical goal that honors God, or a self-serving goal? Also, *how* did it "work"? Did it succeed because God sovereignly causes all things to work together for good in the lives of those who love Him (Romans 8:28), sometimes *in spite of* our sin? Or was the method itself truly biblical and pleasing to God?

Cloud says that he has spent time on both sides, having "tried the 'standard' Christians answers," as well as "'baptizing' psychological insights so that they would somehow feel 'Christian'" (xiii). Significantly, he considers the first approach "worthless medicine" such as offered by Job's friends, but as to the second method: "This didn't work either" (xiii). It doesn't, but Cloud's writings prove that he has not abandoned the "baptized psychological insights" approach.

Cloud insists that he doesn't want to become involved in the debate between psychology and Scripture, but rather wants to offer biblical solutions to the emotional struggles of Christians (xiv). Certainly, we *do* want to offer biblical solutions to the struggles of our fellow believers. We all encounter such struggles--with sin, with emotions, with desires, with the entire inner man. The Scripture promises sufficiency in terms of both power and doctrine (2 Peter 1:3-4; Romans 6:1-14). Meanwhile, Cloud *cannot avoid* the debate between psychology and Scripture. Both deal with the nature of man, problems of living, how people change, and such. The conflict is unavoidable.

Before moving on, let us consider the charge that those who offer "standard Christian answers" are like Job's friends. Much of what these three said was accurate, but they misapplied it. They assumed that because Job was suffering--in the loss of wealth, family, and health--that it *must* be the result of his own sin. As we know from Scripture, it wasn't. Job suffered because he was upright. In the book of Job, we are taken behind the heavenly scene to see the conflict between God and Satan. Job is God's "Exhibit A," demonstrating His intention to redeem mankind. Job's faith is severely tested through a number of afflictions.

However, the sufferings of Job cannot be precisely correlated with the *emotional* pain addressed by modern psychologists. Yes, he did suffer emotionally, but his initial afflictions are seen in the loss of his children, loss of material wealth, and physical disease. It is, indeed, terribly wrong to assume that trials of this nature are the direct result of personal sin. (The modern "health and wealth" gospel has hurt many people with assumptions

similar to those of Job's friends.) However, the individual's *emotional response* to such suffering may be either righteous or sinful. Job truly *did* need to repent, as seen near the end of the book, for his questioning of God's wisdom. His three friends erred in assuming that his original losses were evidence of some hidden sin.

Those who counsel others biblically must indeed remember that physical illness and various types of losses are not necessarily the result of sin. The person's response, however, may be godly or ungodly. Believers sometimes need encouragement, other times admonition or rebuke. The mature Christian can keep on track solely through biblical principles, such as we find in Job, Psalms, 2 Corinthians 1, and other passages. *It is not necessary to employ the godless theories of modern psychology in order to be compassionate!* The friends of Job were unbiblical in their approach, but Cloud's accusations accuse the "sola scriptura" counselor of being like them. This charge is unfounded and we must refute it vigorously.

The Image of God

Cloud rightly notes man's creation in the image of God, along with the important goal of becoming more like Christ in our daily living (xiv). He recognizes that "separating our problems into 'emotional' problems and 'spiritual' problems is part of the problem" (xv). He acknowledges that man's fall into sin is at the root of our problems:

"Because of Adam and Eve's fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, we have not developed the 'likeness' of God in the vital areas of our person, and we are not functioning as we were created to function. Thus, we are in pain." (xv)

In defining the image of God, Cloud identifies what he calls "four aspects of the personality of God," things that God is able to do and that we should do also: (1) bond with others; (2) separate from others; (3) sort out issues of good and bad; (4) take charge as an adult (xv). These are called our "developmental tasks" (xv). *Changes That Heal*, like Townsend's book, *Hiding From Love*, is built around these four issues.

This is a *little* bit of truth here. We were created to be in relationship with God and others. We do have individually defined responsibilities before God. We are called to discern between good and evil, according to the revelation of God's Word. As image bearers, we have been given the charge of ruling over the

rest of God's creation. But is this a truly comprehensive view of the way Scripture defines the image of God? Hardly.

The image of God can be described in two broad categories. Man has retained the image in one sense, but has lost it, through sin, in another sense. Man retains moral agency and rationality; he has not become a beast or a demon in the Fall. Texts such as James 3:9 and Genesis 9:6 affirm this broad sense of God's image, retained by all mankind. But in the sense of moral excellence (righteousness, holiness, knowledge of God's truth), man has lost God's image and needs restoration (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10; Romans 8:29). The "task" of "sorting out good and bad" comes closest to recognizing this aspect of moral excellence, but Cloud's emphasis is on the *acceptance* of both good and bad, rather than on the restoration of holiness. While it is good that he recognizes the importance of the image of God, his definition does not do justice to Scripture.

Grace and Truth

Cloud notes, rightly, that "our God is a God 'full of grace and truth' (John 1:14)" (5). Here is his definition:

"Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward people...unconditional love and acceptance." (5)

Certainly, God's grace is not merited. However, it's even *more* than what Cloud says. Not only do we not merit God's favor; we have forfeited any claim at all to God's goodness. We not only have no merits; we have *demerits*!

Cloud says that "God loves us freely, without condition," and that "such love is the foundation upon which all healing of the human spirit rests" (5). Furthermore, "the Bible itself does not clearly distinguish between grace and love" (6). Both, Cloud says, are undeserved. He defines grace further in terms of relationship:

"Grace is unbroken, uninterrupted, unearned, accepting *relationship*. It is the kind of relationship humanity had with God in the Garden of Eden." (6)

Cloud sees grace in terms of full acceptance from someone who "knows the real you and loves you anyway" (6). There is no need to perform or to do anything. Cloud calls grace "the relational aspect of God's character" (6). It sounds good, but we should be aware that God has something far superior in mind for His

children. He loves you too much to leave you where you are. Certainly, our performance isn't the ground for our justification. It isn't the basis for God's free gift of eternal life. That is graciously given on the grounds of *Christ's* sacrifice and righteousness. But sanctification does involve change and growth in righteous living.

Furthermore, *grace* was unnecessary prior to sin. Grace specifically involves God's love toward those who have forfeited all rights to it. Grace is God's love toward sinners. Our redemption is a gift of God's grace. Certainly, grace is integrally related to God's relationship with those He redeems. However, it is far more than merely the "relational aspect of God's character."

Cloud connects truth with his concept of boundaries. He calls truth "the structural aspect of God's character" (7). It involves giving direction and discerning between right and wrong behavior. Cloud sees the fall as characterized by a ripping apart of grace and truth. He calls them "symbols of the human condition after the fall" (8). According to Cloud, God gave Adam and Eve direction, in the form of law, after their sin severed their relationship with Him. However:

"There was only one problem: God gave them truth without grace.... Truth without grace is judgment. It sounds you straight to hell, literally and experientially." (8-9)

Cloud cites the following passages about law, or specifically, about "truth without grace" (9): Romans 3:19-20, 4:15, 5:20, 7:5, 7:9-10; Galatians 3:10, 3:23, 5:4; James 2:10. He explains that:

"The law without grace destroys us. No one ever grows when they are under the law, for the law put us into a strictly legal relationship with God." (10)

There are some real theological problems here. It is true, of course, that we are unable to merit salvation by keeping God's law. However, Cloud is wrong in assuming that law was given only *after* the Fall. The law of Moses was given a number of years after sin entered the world (Romans 5:13), and not to Adam and Eve. However, God did give Adam and Eve *one* command prior to the Fall. Law existed, simple though it was, and *grace* was not needed. In addition, grace was expressed almost immediately after the fall. God did not merely give Adam and Eve "truth without grace." He promised redemption as early as Genesis 3.

Cloud is also quite wrong about rejecting a legal relationship with God. We *do* have such a relationship, but Christ has perfectly fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law as our representative. As believers, we have been placed in a right legal relationship with God because of Christ's active obedience. We have been declared "not guilty," justified. Our own obedience to God's law is not the legal ground for our justification. God's law, however, is still the standard for our lives. As Christians, we must carefully understand the role of the law.

Cloud also discusses the opposite error, "grace without truth," which is equally deadly. He cites these Scriptures: Galatians 5:13, 5:19-21; Romans 6:15-16; Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 4:3; Proverbs 13:18 (12). He does note rightly, the combination of grace and truth in the Lord, as noted in John 1:14, 16-17 (15). However, there are problems in the way Cloud puts these two concepts together:

"Grace and truth together reverse the effects of the fall, which were separation from God and others. Grace and truth together invite us out of isolation and into relationship. Grace, when it is combined with truth, invites *the true self*, the 'me' as I really am, warts and all, into *relationship*." (15)

This bypasses the whole issue of sanctification, and minimizes the full reality of man's depravity. We are justified solely on the basis of Christ's work, but God doesn't leave us wallowing in our sinful patterns. His Spirit works within us to *sanctify* us, to conform us to the image of Christ. The "true self" idea here is highly flawed and misleading. The "old man" is crucified with Christ. We are *new creations*, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God has planned for us.

Cloud explains further that:

"With grace alone, we are safe from condemnation, but we cannot experience true intimacy.... Real intimacy always comes in the company of truth." (15)

But Cloud's definition of "truth" is not well grounded in God's Word. Rather it is "truth about who we are, truth about who he or she is, and truth about the world around us" (15). All of these, however, must be seen through the lens of Scripture, which Cloud doesn't mention.

Cloud notes the truth that we are sinners, but he mixes this with his erroneous "true self" concept:

"The sad thing is that many of us come to Christ because we are sinners, and then spend the rest of our lives trying to prove that we are not! We try to hide who we really are."
(17)

He goes on to discuss the "real self" as opposed to the "false self" (17). He states that:

"When the real self comes into relationship with God and others, an incredible dynamic is set into motion: we grow as God created us to grow.... Problems occur when the real self, the one God created, is hiding from God and others. If the true self is in hiding, the false self takes over. The false self is the self that is conformed to this world (Romans 12:2)." (17-18)

What Cloud describes here is the fact that we tend to hide our sins. It is highly misleading to describe the "true self" as "the one that God created."

Furthermore, Cloud says that:

"Grace and truth are a healing combination because they deal with one of the main barriers to all growth: guilt." (19)

Cloud notes that we have both sinned and been sinned against (19). He believes that our guilt sends us into hiding, and that:

"If we have to hide, we cannot get help for our needs and brokenness; we cannot become 'poor in Spirit,' and therefore be blessed." (19) (Spirit should not be capitalized here!)

God's grace and truth *do* provide a remedy for our guilt, for our sin. People hide *from God's judgment*. Our need is for justification, for reconciliation and right standing with God.

Cloud is critical of many churches because they lack the right balance of truth and grace (20). Frankly, in view of the wholesale takeover of psychology, these "legalistic churches" are hard to locate. Cloud, however, notes that many Christians have turned outside the church, to AA for example, because they find acceptance of their problems (20). He says that it is unacceptable, and sinful, to have problems in the "legalistic" church. In AA, however, it is unacceptable to be perfect; it's

called "denial" (20). Yet AA has no concept of God's law, so God's grace in Christ is irrelevant, and biblical sanctification is absent.

Certainly, we must minister to others in the body of Christ with *both* grace and truth. Note, however, that there is no dichotomy in the Scripture. God's truth is, most importantly, a revelation of the gospel, of God's *grace* in Christ Jesus. The whole concept of grace, necessary because of our sin, has no meaning apart from the absolute moral standards of God's truth.

Time. Cloud says that we often:

"...want growth, but we judge ourselves quickly and harshly without taking the time to figure out the problem. We operate with truth and no grace." (22)

He also notes that the opposite may happen, where we ignore our failure to bear fruit (22). However:

"The Bible tells us that in order for grace and truth to produce fruit, we need a third key element: time. God is much too loving to allow us to continue in sin for one moment longer than necessary. Time is not a luxury, but a necessity." (23)

After the fall, God sent Adam and Eve:

"...to a new place called *redemptive time*, where we live now. Here God could fix the problem; he could undo the effects of the fall. He could redeem his creation, and then bring humankind back into eternity after it was holy and blameless." (24-25)

This needs critique. The believer is without sin when he enters into eternal glory; however, he is far from sinless at the time of physical death. God can transform in an instant if and when He chooses. He did choose to progressively sanctify His people while they continue to live on earth. However, Cloud's analysis sounds as if we will all work up to a sinless state and *then* be ushered into eternity. This may not be the conclusion he intends, but his statement is confusing.

"Redemptive time" is defined as "a place where God can lovingly fix what is wrong...a place where evil temporarily exists while God does his work" (25). Cloud speaks of different stages in a believer's growth, but states that we often want to rush it

(27). Quoting Mark 4:26-29, about the growth of scattered seed, Cloud says that:

"This passage illustrates an important truth about the growth process. *It cannot be willed.* It can only be enhanced by adding grace, truth, and time, and then God produces the growth." (31)

So far, we can find much to commend. Our growth in righteousness is indeed progressive. God's Spirit works within to transform and to conform us to the image of Christ. We are definitively set apart (sanctified) at the time of salvation, but our growth is a lifelong process.

Cloud moves away from biblical truth when he distinguishes between "good time" and "bad time":

"If we have removed some aspect of ourselves from time, grace and truth cannot transform it. Whatever aspect of ourselves that we leave outside of experience, that we leave in 'bad time,' goes unchanged.... We take different aspects of our person out of time, that is, out of experience, and they remain exactly as they were when they were buried in 'bad time.'" (32)

As an example, Cloud cites a woman whose parents divorced when she was twelve (33). He believes that she missed out on the "developmental tasks" of her adolescent years, thus explaining a "panic disorder" later in life accompanied by strange behaviors while in his hospital program, such as flirting with men, childlike behavior, and mocking of nurses and doctors (33). Cloud says this woman had to "experience the split-off twelve-year-old and accept this part of herself as a valid part of who she was" (34). He explains his belief that:

"When an aspect of a person does not enter into time, this person's emotional maturity will stagnate at this level.... Because the aspect of ourselves that goes outside of time in childhood gets stored in its chronological state, it is still that same age when it returns." (35, 37)

Cloud notes rightly that God cares for us (Psalm 68:5-6). However, what he says here is *theory*, not established fact. Explaining this *theory* further, he says that:

"The lonely child, the hurting child, the untrained child, and whoever else we 'were,' is still alive; he or she is eternal and lives within us." (37)

This is the "inner child" concept so popular among psychologists. We may act childlike in some respect, but that doesn't mean that a *separate entity*, an "inner child," is actually alive inside of us.

In general, Cloud's definition of "truth" is sadly mixed and lacking:

"The truth we need to achieve has many aspects. It includes the developmental needs of the real self, the grace of relationship, and the external truth of the precepts of God. And it takes time for all of these to work." (39)

God's Word *is* truth (John 17:17). Cloud has part of his definition right (the precepts of God), but he greatly confuses the issue through his addition of psychological theories.

Now we turn to the four basic "developmental tasks" that Cloud insists are so crucial.

"Developmental Task" #1: Attachment/Bonding

Cloud defines bonding as a very basic human need:

"Bonding is the ability to establish an emotional attachment to another person. It's the ability to relate to another on the deepest level.... Bonding is one of the most basic and foundational ideas in life and the universe. It is a basic human need. God created us with a hunger for relationship--for relationship with him and with our fellow people. At our very core we are relational beings. Without a solid, bonded relationship, the human soul will become mired in psychological and emotional problems." (45-46)

Cloud cites John 15, where Jesus speaks of the vine/branch connection (47). He notes the Trinity; God is not alone (47-48). Also, he rightly states the truth of Scripture that "God is love."

Relationship, according to Cloud, is essential to what it means to be human:

"Without relationship, without attachment to God and others, we can't be our true selves. We can't be truly human." (49)

The concept of "true self," however, is dangerous. Psychologists place a high premium on being one's "true self," more than on being conformed to the image of Christ. Also, Cloud implies (wrongly) that an isolated person might not be "truly human."

Cloud warns against attempting to get our needs met apart from other people:

"We sometimes think...that we can supply all of our needs without other people. We think that, in a state of emotional and spiritual isolation, we can still grow. This grave violation of the basic nature of the universe can cause serious problems." (50)

Cloud believes that spiritual leaders often give advice that is "disastrous for hurting people" by telling them to "depend on the Lord" rather than other people (59). Such leaders, he says, consider "relational" teaching, such as he offers, to be "humanistic" (59). But he insists that they are wrong:

"These teachers miss the relational aspects of sanctification, or becoming holy. Sanctification rests on the working out of our relationships with God, others, and ourselves. If any one of these three connections break, we are in trouble. The teaching that we can love God without loving others is heresy" (citing 1 John 4:20). (60)

Quite true; however, Scripture focuses on our love for *others*, not on developing relationships primarily to get our on needs met. It isn't that we *don't* need relationships with others, but that our focus as believers is first on loving God, then loving others--not taking love *from* them. According to Scripture (Ephesians 4 and elsewhere), we do have a bond with the body of Christ that involves mutual care.

Cloud raises additional criticism based on a split between correct theology and people's pain:

"These teachers are more concerned with the 'rightness' of their theology and rules than they are with people's hurts.... All over Christendom, innocent, hurting people who need love and compassion are being commanded away from relationship and into self-sacrifice to gain wholeness." (60)

Contrary to statements like this one, there is no dichotomy between correct theology and compassion. Self-sacrifice and relationship are *not* mutually exclusive categories. In fact,

sound theology involves real care, compassion, and concern for the suffering of others. Furthermore, not one of us is *innocent* (Romans 3:23).

Cloud notes man's separation from God at the fall:

"This thrust them into a state of isolation--from God and from each other. They became people in pain." (50)

"Because we live in a fallen world, we are not born into connection. It has to be gained, and it is an arduous, developmental process." (51)

Cloud believes that a child who bonds properly with his mother will "internalize" her care such that a "self-soothing" system is formed, wherein "the child can literally have a relationship with the one who loves him in her absence" (53). He applies similar reasoning to the believer's spiritual birth:

"When we are born again spiritually speaking, we begin internalizing memories of God." (54)

Cloud notes the many times in Scripture where we are instructed to *remember* the acts of God in the past (54). True, but many of these are God's mighty acts in the distant past, recorded for us in the Scripture. We do need to remember God's acts in our own lives, but there is much more to it than that. God's greatest redemptive act, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, is about 2,000 years in the past! We are not "internalizing memories of God" when we remember this greatest act of His love.

Cloud speaks about the benefits of attachment as: [1] a basis for morality (love rather than rules), [2] an ability to handle stress, [3] meaning for accomplishments (61). In considering love as the basis for morality, Cloud sees a dichotomy between self-sacrifice based on attachment and that grounded in it being "the right thing to do" (61). Biblically, there is no such dichotomy. The person who *loves* God is *also* the one who *obeys* His commandments.

Cloud believes that attachment enables people to make good use of time spent alone:

"Bonded people are able to tolerate, and to use constructively, time alone. Being alone does not mean they are isolated." (63)

They work for the good of others, not to accumulate possessions or to run away from pain.

It is true, as Cloud acknowledges, that our redemption is discussed in the Bible in terms of *reconciliation* with God. The believer is restored to a right relationship with God, who becomes his heavenly Father. It is also true that relationships within the body of Christ are important, and that no Christian ought to be isolated from others. Many Scriptures testify to the importance of reconciliation in our relationships with others (Matthew 5:23-24 and 18:15-20, for example). However, the central concern in the psychological way is *getting our needs met*. Our needs truly are met in Christ, and we do need relationships with other believers for encouragement, counsel, and other types of care. Scripture, however, focuses on *serving* God and others.

Cloud's self-focus can be clearly seen when he discusses the failure to bond:

"People who can't make emotional attachments live in a state of perpetual hunger. They have a crying need that's not being met." (65)

He believes that isolated people pass through three stages: [1] protest against their lack of relationship (65), [2] depression and despair (66), [3] detachment (66). He sees the depression stage as good, because at this point "people are at least in touch with what they want...they still feel the need" even though they believe it may never be fulfilled (66). At the final stage, however, people "are detached both from their own need for others and from the outside world...at times they no longer even feel alive" (66).

Cloud lists a multitude of "symptoms" arising from the failure to bond:

[1] Depression, which "can, in part, be caused by a person trying to repress his or her feelings of sadness and anger--the two ingredients of the God-given protest against lack of love" (67).

[2] Feelings of badness and guilt: "An alone self seems to be an unloved self, and that translates to a 'bad self'" (68).

"We derive our self-worth to a large extent from other people" (68).

"They can't feel forgiven because the root of this kind of guilt is not sin; it's loneliness and isolation" (69).

This is typical of the way psychologists confuse issues of sin and guilt. Guilt is turned into a *feeling* rather than the transgression of God's law.

[3] Addiction: "Addicted people must admit their powerlessness and their need for God and others, as well as soften their heart toward those they have injured and realize their deceitful desires. Addictions are not real desires. They are substitutes for some other need of the real self." (70)

Ephesians 4:22-24 speaks of the *deceitful* desires of the "old man," apart from Christ, which is *corrupt*. Cloud's statement sounds as if such sinful lusts could be considered legitimate "needs."

[4] Distorted thinking: "As people are shut off from others, their anger, sadness, and depression begin to interfere with their thinking processes. Their circuits overload, and their thought processes become distorted.... Isolated people come up with all sorts of delusions and obsessions to explain their internal pain." (71)

[5] Emptiness: "Empty people can't feel their own need for love, and they can't feel others' love for them" (72).

After noting that God sent Titus to Paul when he was in need, Cloud says: "Compare God's way to the way of some people. These people tell those who hurt that they don't need others; they should just pray and study Scripture! This is like cutting off the hand of God, who wants to comfort the empty by sending his body to minister!" (73)

This is a gross caricature of those who believe in the sufficiency of Scripture without the intrusion of psychology. The psychological way encourages the false, "professional" relationship of therapy, rather than *real* relationships in the body of Christ.

[6] Sadness: "A lack of bonding not only results in a lack of joy, but produces a feeling of deep sadness. Joy comes through connection and relationship with God and others." (73)

[7] **Fears of intimacy:** "People who have never had close relationships with other people will fear intimacy and avoid closeness with others." (74)

[8] **Feeling of unreality:** "Some people get so detached that they literally feel disconnected from the world around them.... Because God has created a relational world, people can know their true selves only in relationship." (74)

[9] **Panic:** "When people get close to utter isolation, they panic. It is the most terrifying experience known to humans." (74)

[10] **Rage:** "Rage, or furious, uncontrolled anger, is often a symptom of isolation." (75)

[11] **Excessive caretaking:** "The only way some people can feel close to others is to take care of them...underneath many a caretaker's mask is a desperate need for relationship." (75) Cloud states that: "Part of the real self is the needy self; if we are always giving and never receiving, we are denying part of who we truly are." (75)

[12] **Fantasy:** "One can have a safe relationship with an ideal fantasy, but it never fulfills; only a real relationship can do that. Idealism furthers isolation. Real connection cures it." (76)

It seems that almost anything can be explained away as the failure to bond. Cloud exalts the "neediness" of mankind:

"Ironically, *neediness* is the highest stance for humankind, for that's where God and others can meet us.... Because of the fall, a whole host of problems render us isolated and unable to attach to others." (76)

Man *is*, indeed, "needy," but not primarily in the sense proclaimed by Cloud. *Man needs to be reconciled to his Creator.* That is far more crucial than the inability to "attach" to others.

Barriers to bonding. Cloud moves on to list several "barriers to bonding." Not surprisingly, one of these is injury suffered in the past:

"...if our needs are not met, if we are neglected, abandoned, beaten, abused, criticized, hated, or resented for existing,

then our very ability to trust and be vulnerable is injured. And our ability to bond is based on our ability to be vulnerable and needy." (77)

We must never excuse hatred, neglect, abandonment, and other grievous sins committed against children. However, the psychological view grounds adult behavior in sins committed by others, making man primarily a victim rather than a sinner.

Distorted thinking is another obstacle to bonding proposed by Cloud. Here he speaks first of how we view ourselves, for example, "I am bad...unlovable...don't deserve love" (78-79), or "my sins are worse than other people's sins" (79). "We think that if we are not loved, it must be because we did not earn it." (79) Other thoughts include the belief that "my neediness/feelings will overwhelm anyone" and "my need for other is not valid" (79-80).

Cloud goes on to talk about distorted views of others, including the belief that others are not trustworthy, that they will abandon, criticize, disapprove, or control (80-81). All of this is supposedly grounded in past experience, resulting in the inability to trust other people:

"Some people feel that others will disapprove of their needs. As a result, the real self cannot bond with another, for it fears judgment. It must stay in hiding, outside of the relationship." (81)

Finally, Cloud discusses our views of God. These include the belief that God doesn't love us, based on human relationships (81-82), the belief that God is angry (82) or that He doesn't hear and answer prayer (82). Others may not believe in God's forgiveness:

"Isolated people often believe that God has deserted them and doomed them to hell. They think they have committed some 'unpardonable sin.' This is really their attempt to get their theology to match their experience, for they feel like they are already in hell. Since they are unconnected, they don't feel a lot of grace or forgiveness. Even when they know intellectually that there's no sin God will not forgive (except the rejection of Jesus), they need human connection to begin to feel it emotionally." (83)

Cloud rejects counsel to simply change one's thinking:

"No real and deep change occurs outside of relationship and trust, for that is the place where the heart lives...it is

imperative for us to be in a safe relationship to recognize our distorted thinking and to change it." (83)

Cloud makes a sharp distinction between the intellect and the emotions here, emphasizing the latter as most important. Furthermore, he explains spiritual issues, such as the lack of assurance about salvation, in psychological terms. He underestimates the power of God's Word and Spirit, without psychotherapy (!), to bring about godly changes.

In discussing "attachment" and "bonding," Cloud brings in his flawed concept of the "true self":

"If God has given us opportunity for good relationships, then we must face our distortions of the truth and bring our real self into attachment with others." (84)

It is true that we should not present ourselves to others as sinless; as believers, we are sinners saved by grace. Scripture exhorts us to honestly confess and ask forgiveness of those we have sinned against. However, we are not exhorted to disclose anything and everything to anyone and everyone. We are to follow biblical principles concerning what we disclose, and to whom, taking care not to sin against others. Furthermore, this whole concept has a tendency to presume that the "real self" is relatively pure and innocent.

Numerous other "barriers to bonding" are described in detail, including:

Defense mechanisms: "Not only do we struggle with injuries to our 'trust muscle' and with distortions of God, ourselves, and others, we also have built up a wall of defense mechanisms against relationship. In the beginning, it may have made sense to have these, for we may have been surrounded by hurtful relationships." (84)

Denial: "Denial is the psychological defense mechanisms in which people avoid confronting a personal problem or reality by denying its existence. Denial of one's need for others is the most common type of defense against bonding." (85)

Both "defense mechanisms" and "denial" are grounded in the speculations of Freud, an enemy of Christianity. The human heart is indeed *deceitful*, and people *lie*. However, the Freudian categories grossly distort responsibility for sinful actions and

reactions. But Cloud presses on with theories rooted and grounded in Freud:

Devaluation: "Devaluing available love is a defense used by most people who struggle with emotional isolation...this is a horrible defense, because people are pushing away what they most need." (85-86)

On this one, Cloud uses--or rather *abuses*--Scripture to explain theories grounded in modern psychology rather than God's truth:

"In the Gospels, blaspheming the Holy Spirit was the only unforgivable sin against God. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of grace, was trying to reach into the first-century world and draw people to Jesus by proving who he was. But instead of responding to the Spirit's grace, they turned the good into bad and stayed away from Love. The sin was unforgivable because it kept them away from grace.... It isn't unforgivable to reject human love, but it has the same devastating effects. Blasphemy, or rejection, of the human spirit would be devaluing love when it comes to us." (86)

In context, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was to attribute the work of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, to the devil. People who ultimately reject Christ are indeed cut off from relationship--from *God, eternally*. The issue is far more serious than merely isolating oneself from relationship. Far more serious! Rejection of *human* love does not have "the same devastating effects" as the rejection of Christ, which has *eternal* consequences.

Even more variations on the Freudian theme are encountered as we complete our look at Cloud's "barriers to bonding" list:

Projection: "Projection is the attributing of one's own ideas, feeling, or attitudes to other people...caretakers sometimes vicariously meet their needs by projecting them onto others instead of owning them themselves...we must be careful to own our own needs and not project them outward, where we cannot get them met." (86)

Reaction formation: "Reaction formation is a defense mechanism in which people express a feeling or trait that's the exact opposite of a feeling or impulse they are (often unconsciously) suppressing.... These people may construct an entire theology around the denial of the need for

relationship, going in the opposite direction of what they unconsciously need." (87)

Idealization: "Idealization is the act of thinking of something as ideal or perfect, or as more nearly perfect than is true." (87)

Substitution: This is the substitution of something like food, drugs, or sex for real relationships (88).

Mania: "If people stay busy enough, then they can deny their need for others" (87). This one includes, in addition to hyperactivity, disorganized behavior and an elevated mood.

These terms and underlying concepts are borrowed from Freud, although Cloud doesn't credit him. When people focus on the sins of others, we dare not write it off to "projection." When people lie about themselves, we cannot call it "reaction formation." When people exchange the worship of the Creator for the worship of created things, we must call it idolatry, not "idealization" or "substitution." Keeping busy may have many differing motivations; it could be genuine service to the Lord, or it could be seeking the approval of man. In all of these areas, we must seek both biblical explanations and biblical solutions.

When Cloud begins to talk about "learning God's ways," he continues to rely on the speculations of modern psychology, even though he *claims* to be biblical. First, he states that:

"Past injuries, distorted thinking, and defense mechanisms are direct results of the fall; everyone has them to different degrees. The Bible addresses all three." (88)

Scripture does instruct us about how to respond to life's trials and the sins of others. God's truth directs our thoughts and teaches us how to take every thought captive in obedience to Christ. "Defense mechanisms" is not a biblical concept, but the Bible is living and active, able to discern the innermost thoughts and imaginations of the human heart (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Rather than acknowledging sinful thoughts as arising out of the heart, Cloud attributes them to childhood experiences:

"We inherit distorted thinking from the system of relational rules operating in the family in which we were raised." (89)

Cloud speaks of the "theology of the dysfunctional family" (90) and its "ten commandments," mostly centered on the denial of *feelings* and *needs*. He states that:

"We have to renounce the rules of relationship we learned in the first spiritual system and learn God's ways of connection. When we start to make this shift, we may enter into conflict with many friends, spiritual leaders, and even family members." (91)

Cloud cites Matthew 10:34-37 for support. However, Jesus was speaking here of those who trust Him as Savior but have unsaved relatives. This is a much different issue! Psychologists regularly read their own theories onto Scripture, rather than hearing what *God* has to say in His Word.

Cloud does indicate that we are not called to turn against those who do not accept the importance of relationship. Yet he seems to speak from both sides of his mouth:

"However, we must see those who do not believe in the importance of love as enemies of our souls; those who reject love reject God's ways.... We need to examine our relationships to see if they are helping us grow in the image of God. Saying no to bad relationships and yes to good is difficult if someone is tied to the bad." (92)

This perspective seems more concerned with *receiving* love from others rather than *giving* it. Sometimes we do need more mature believers to instruct and encourage us in the faith, but that does not mean that we exclude what psychologists might call "bad" relationships. In these cases we *give* love!

Learning to bond. Cloud says that "learning to bond when you missed out the first time around won't happen overnight" (93). In one chapter, Cloud lists various "skills" that he believes need to be developed in order to bond with others: realize your need for attachment (94), move toward others (94), be vulnerable (95), challenge distorted thinking (95), take risks (96), allow dependent feelings (96), recognize defenses (96), become comfortable with anger (97), pray and meditate (97), be empathetic (98), rely on the Holy Spirit (98), and "say yes to life" (98). Again, he seems more concerned with *getting* love than with *giving* it. This is particularly evident when he states that:

"Many of you do not realize that your problems stem from a lack of bonding and attachment.... Often...others cannot see

what you need and how emotionally isolated you really are. Therefore, to the best of your ability, actively reach out for help and support." (94)

"When you can admit that you need support and help, and can reveal your hurt and isolation, a dynamic is set into motion that can literally transform your personality and life." (95)

Cloud believes that isolation may be rooted in an inability "to show your real selves to others" (95). Whatever happened to God's *two* great commandments, to love the Lord with your whole being, and your neighbor as you already love yourself?

Cloud presses on with a view that begins and ends primarily with self. He continues to remain focused on the power of the past:

"To the extent that you continue to see the world through your childhood eyeglasses, your past will be your future.... You need new relationship to undo the learning of the past; there your real self can be connected in grace and truth and thereby transformed." (95)

Being "needy" continues to be high on Cloud's agenda:

"People and God will call to you, but if your distorted thinking and your resistance to risk get in the way, you will keep the door closed so that attachment cannot happen. Allow yourself to risk valuing someone emotionally. Risk getting hurt again.... Whenever you begin to allow someone to matter to your isolated heart, uncomfortable needy and dependent feelings will surface...though uncomfortable, these feelings are a key to attachment." (96)

Feelings of anger are also a high priority:

"It is natural to feel angry toward people you need. The more you can feel comfortable with angry feelings toward 'good' people, the more you can integrate those feelings into the relationship and not spoil it.... The angry self is an aspect of personhood that many people prefer to leave 'unbonded.' They believe that it is the unlovable aspect of who they are." (97)

Biblically, there is much to be said about anger, which can be either righteous or unrighteous (see Discernment's paper about Ephesians 4:26). But "natural"?

Even sharing the sufferings of others is something that Cloud grounds in selfish motivation:

"Empathizing with others' needs, identifying with their hurt, softens your own heart.... I'm talking about identifying with the struggler in order to get in touch with your own hurt and loneliness." (98)

Cloud concludes his section on bonding by stating that "the task of bonding to others and God is one of saying yes to life" (98). We can agree that relationships with God and others are very, very important. As believers, we are united by a common salvation, one Lord, one Spirit (see Ephesians 4). There is a wonderful, intimate fellowship in this unity. However, Scripture focuses on the ultimate glory of God and service to Him and others, not a get-your-own-needs-met-first agenda such as Cloud proposes.

"Developmental Task" #2: Separation and "Boundaries"

A significant section of this book is devoted to "separating from others," or "boundaries." Cloud co-authored an entire book on this topic with John Townsend: *Boundaries*. I refer the reader to Discernment's lengthy critique of that book for more information.

Here is Cloud's basic definition:

"In a psychological sense, boundaries are the realization of our own person apart from others. This sense of separateness forms the basis of personal identity.... Boundaries, in short, define us...who we are and who we are not." (107)

This "boundaries" concept is used to explain a multitude of evils:

"Many people struggle to discover, set, and guard their personal boundaries. They truly cannot tell where they end and someone else begins, and thus they suffer from lack of purpose, powerlessness, panic, identity loss, eating disorders, depression, irresponsibility, and a whole host of other problems, all of which lead to a lack of real intimacy with others." (107)

"Probably the most destructive result of lack of boundaries is physical and emotional abuse. People who are unable to set boundaries allow themselves to be repeatedly controlled and even injured by others." (107)

Far too much weight is placed on this one psychological concept, even if it were valid. Failure to "bond" and failure to "separate" are seemingly innocuous explanations for a wide variety of sins, including the failure to respond biblically to the sins of others.

Cloud has some comments about "bonding" and "boundaries" as related to God:

"God is a bonded person. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are always connected; they have an eternal 'oneness.' However, just as unity is the most basic quality God possesses, he has diversity within this unity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct, separate persons. They are not 'fused' in a way that they lose their individual identity. They have boundaries between them." (110)

"In addition, God is separate from his creation." (110)

Each Person of the Trinity is fully God in essence, yet each is distinct. However, this wonderful mystery of the triune God cannot be explained in terms of the psychological "boundaries" concept. It is beyond our fuzzy little finite minds to fully comprehend the Trinity--one God, three Persons. Modern psychology cannot explain the mystery!

As for the Creator/creation distinction, it is true that God is separate and distinct from what He has created. Cloud notes the many ways in which God defines Himself, in terms of who He is, what He thinks and feels, and what He chooses to do (111-112). He also speaks about what He hates (112). However, the Creator/creation distinction, and revelation about God's character, is far more critical than merely a setting of "boundaries." The psychologizing of God, attempting to explain Him in the terms and concepts of modern psychology, is offensive when we consider the awesome and incomprehensible nature of our almighty, sovereign Creator.

Besides explaining God, Cloud explains away the whole matter of human sin:

"On the human level, just as our connection was marred in the fall, so is our sense of separateness, boundaries, and responsibility. We are all confused as to where we end and someone else begins." (110-111)

Human beings do sinfully shift responsibility, but not because of confusion about "where we end and someone else begins." This seriously minimizes the gravity of sin.

Boundaries related to *emotions* are a key focus in Cloud's writing. He attempts to prove his point from Scripture:

"The writer of Ecclesiastes shows the importance of owning feelings: 'The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning' (7:4). People who do not deal with their feelings are not wise; they can 'lose touch' with themselves." (116)

The book of Ecclesiastes brings us face to face with the frustrating, meaningless side of life, drawing us to the conclusion that the duty of every man is to fear God and obey His commandments. The seeming futility of life is placed in proper perspective. In context, the words here about "the house of mourning" are *not* about getting in touch with ourselves! They are about facing the frustrating side of earthly life after the fall. We can "chase after the wind" (a recurring phrase in Ecclesiastes) by constantly "getting in touch" with our feelings and other psychological maneuvers. But as believers, we have an eternal perspective that frees us from being overly entangled in the affairs of earthly life. We must continue to live and work in the real world, interacting with others, but we do so with our eyes on Jesus Christ and our eternal inheritance.

Yet Cloud presses on, treating the Bible as if it were made of wax. Citing the parable of the workers hired at the last hour of the day, in Matthew 20:1-15, Cloud says that:

"Jesus made them own responsibility for their feelings and pointed out that he had the right to do whatever he wanted with his property." (117)

This passage is about eternal salvation, not "boundaries"! Cloud imposes his theories onto the text and ignores what Jesus was teaching about God granting salvation.

It gets even worse, even more contrary to Scripture:

"People out of touch with this truth ["owning" their behavior] feel powerless because they have no faith in the basic law of cause and effect. This law is also called the law of reaping and sowing, which governs the entire universe. God has set up an ordered universe: if we behave in a certain way, certain things will happen. It is the basis for our

security, for it gives us control of ourselves and our life."
(118)

"People who obey this law [sowing and reaping] of the universe feel in control of their lives, to the extent that we are able to feel in control. If they have a need, they behave in a way that will get their need met." (119)

This is horrible! What about Job?! Cloud has mentioned Job's comforters, yet here he seems to reiterate their error. Yes, sin has consequences--serious *eternal* consequences if the individual fails to repent and trust Christ. As the book of Job demonstrates forcefully, however, we are *not in control!* That book gives us a quick peek behind the heavenly scene. Job's ultimate repentance, for questioning God's wisdom, drives home this point. Furthermore, Scripture does not instruct us to devise our behavior according to the need meeting agenda proclaimed by Cloud. God *does* meet our true needs, and we do sometimes seek out other believers for various kinds of assistance. However, *self* is not the first and last and prime consideration. We live for *God's* glory.

More distortion of Scripture occurs when Cloud cites 2 Corinthians 10:5 and says that:

"When we take every thought captive, we take responsibility for and evaluate it. We are not repressing or denying thoughts. We are owning them." (120)

"If we cannot separate our own thoughts and opinions from another, we have ceased to be a person in our own right, and have denied something that God will one day hold us responsible for." (122)

"Thinking our own thoughts is the beginning of freedom and responsibility." (123)

A critical phrase has been omitted in the first quote here! We are to take every thought captive *in obedience to Christ*. This is a far different idea than merely "owning" our thoughts, thinking "our own" thoughts, or separating our thoughts from those of other people in order to establish "identity." We evaluate and take responsibility *according to biblical standards*.

Cloud's "true self" theme is again prominent:

"We are separate people with separate identity, and we must not be conformed into someone else's wishes that may conflict with what God has designed for us. We must own what is our true self, and develop it with God's grace and truth." (124)

Cloud quotes Romans 12:2-8 here. This passage is about serving God with the gifts He has given to each of us. Certainly, we must each recognize and develop the specific gifts God has given, seeking to please Him rather than man. However, the psychological concept of a "true self" distorts the biblical truth about being *conformed to the image of Christ*. Furthermore, as fallen creatures, our tendency is to excuse sinful patterns as something inherent to the "true self."

Cloud applies similar reasoning to our desires:

"Our desires are a major part of what it means to be created in God's likeness.... When we do not acknowledge our desires, we cut ourselves off from who we are, and we limit our future satisfaction, our future service to God and others, our motivation, and our sanctification." (125)

"On the one hand, God is delighted to give us good things, if they fit who we really are.... On the other hand, God is not delighted to help us inflate our ego." (126)

"When we are with people who are clear about what they want, we get a sense of being with solid entities. Their personhood has definition, and their personality has edges." (127)

Cloud does admit that human desires are not always good. However, when he teaches that our desires are a major part of "who we are," he fails to adequately consider the seriousness of sin. Some desires need to be *crucified*. God gives good things on the basis of *His glory*, not to "fit who we really are."

Another key "boundary" area involves our choices:

"Choices are the foundation upon which boundaries are built. But *our choices are not true choices unless we are aware of all the aspects of our identity that go into them--our feelings, attitudes, behaviors, wants, and thoughts.*" (128)

Like many psychologists, Cloud insists that giving to others must be based on personal choice rather than any sort of obligation:

"If we do not feel like we have a choice, we feel we are out of control of our lives, and we resent the ones we perceive as being in control of us. It is the opposite of freedom and the opposite of love.... Many people give out of obligation and compulsion, which leads to resentment." (129)

The author warns against loving others "past our limits":

"Many people don't take responsibility for their limits and overextend themselves.... Sometimes, we don't know the limits of our love, and we love past where we should." (131)

"If someone is asking too much of us, we must draw the line as to what we will give and what we will not. If someone is asking too much of us, we must draw the line as to what we will give and what we will not." (132)

Cloud notes that "other people have too narrow limits...they do not extend their boundaries far enough to give what they can give" (132).

In both of these instances, we need to think biblically. The person who "gives too much" might be acting out of ungodly motives, such as the fear of man. The person who fails to give is not obeying the second great commandment, to love others as much as self. Scripture clarifies our true biblical responsibilities, along with giving us the proper priorities--love of God, love of others.

Yet Cloud presses his psychological "boundary" concept into explaining the failure to take responsibility:

"Many people are not in touch with their 'not-me' experiences.... Just as we need to take responsibility for what lies inside our boundaries, we need to admit to ourselves what lies outside." (133)

As an example, Cloud cites Matthew 21:28-31, saying that:

"The second son did not know who he really was. He didn't want to work in the vineyard, but he couldn't say, 'I won't go.' Thus, he was out of touch with himself.... The second son could not own his no, so it owned him." (134)

However, reading this passage in context indicates that it was this second son, supposedly "out of touch with himself," who did the will of his father! He is the very one that Jesus commends!

The Scripture indicates that he regretted his initial unwillingness to obey his father. Cloud's analysis is one that twists the Scripture to fit a preconceived psychological notion not found in the Bible.

Cloud also proposes "boundary" problems as the reason for remaining in sin:

"If we can't say what we are not, we have no hope of holiness, for we cannot hate evil and be separate from it."
(134)

It is true that to be *holy* means to be separate, consecrated to God. However, the problem just described is not a lack of "boundaries," but more likely the fear of man or the love of some sin. It isn't a matter of saying "who we are" (we are sinners!) or "who we are not," but rather knowing *who God is* and being set apart to serve Him. Knowing Him, and being fully consecrated to Him, allows the believer to forego concern with protecting his "boundaries" in order to serve God and others according to scriptural standards.

How "boundaries" are developed. In this section, it is quite evident that Cloud, like many psychologists, places great emphasis on what happens in early childhood. He believes that "boundaries" can only exist in conjunction with proper attachment:

"There must be internal bonding for one to be able to establish boundaries. Without it, boundaries as they were meant to be cannot exist." (137)

"If someone cannot attach, then separateness has no meaning.... Attachment gives us the safety and the strength to separate." (138)

Cloud looks back to the mother/child relationship, particularly the very first year of life, in explaining the development of both bonding and boundaries:

"As we look at how a person develops, the first year is one of bonding. It is one where there is very little separateness and assertion. This year lays the foundation of being 'rooted and grounded in love' (Ephesians 3:17), which will give us the safety and connectedness to venture out in separateness. We can never be truly separate from someone if we have not first been bonded." (138)

"Trust and relationship is established in an initial bonding period, and from this trust comes the working out of a separateness that is not frightening because of the bond. It is the basis for what God calls bond servanthood in the New Testament. Because of our love for God, He can give us the freedom of our separateness." (139)

First of all, Scripture never places this sort of emphasis on early childhood. Being "rooted and grounded in love," in Ephesians 3:17, concerns *Christ's love*, which is described in this context in glorious terms. His love is infinitely more powerful than that of any human. Furthermore, God doesn't "give us the freedom of our separateness." Where is this in Scripture? Consider, for example, John 17:21-23, where Jesus affirms exactly the opposite! There is a wonderful bond of unity between believers and their Lord. There is also the assurance of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Cloud explains *sin* through the "boundary" concept:

"In the Fall, our boundaries were destroyed. Since we no longer had grace, we could not tell the truth about who owned what. Adam said it was the woman's fault, not his.... They chose to reach past their allotted boundaries. And God held them responsible for all of those choices." (143)

First of all, *grace* was necessary only *after* the fall, not before. Grace concerns God's love for sinners, who have forfeited any claim to it. Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command. Cloud blurs the gravity of their sin (disobedience) by explaining it away as a "boundary" problem, and also by his statement that we no longer know "who owns what." We have God's clear revelation in Scripture to define our responsibilities.

Much of what is discussed here involves *responsibility*, a much better term than *boundaries*. Also involved here is *love* for God and others, esteeming them ahead of self (Philippians 2:3). Cloud does talk about responsibility, but matters would be clarified by holding to that term rather than introducing "boundaries" to explain away so much sin.

Forgiveness, critical to the Christian faith, is another area where Cloud applies reasoning based on "boundaries":

"Part of the forgiveness process is to call sin, sin. We must confess how we have been sinned against in order to forgive. However, after an appropriate period of blame, we

must begin to take responsibility for the mess that someone else's sin has left us in. Our situation is part of our property; we must own it and deal with our feelings, attitudes, and behaviors to get unstuck even if we did not cause it." (146-147)

It is true that sin must be acknowledged as sin, whether in ourselves or in others. However, Scripture never recognizes an "appropriate period of blame," such as we so often find in modern psychotherapy. We do have a responsibility to respond biblically to the sins of others. Part of that responsibility involves the loving restoration of others, something psychologists rarely mention. In addition, our own restoration is something orchestrated by the work of the Spirit, using the Word. It is not a self-help project, even though we actively participate by the power of God working within us.

Crossing over "boundaries." Cloud defines a wide range of *sin* through the psychological "boundaries" category. He begins with a statement similar to popular "codependency" teachings:

"When we do not own ourselves as separate people from the ones we are bonded to, we develop unclear boundaries, and we allow people to cross those boundaries when we should be saying no." (149)

From this general statement, he moves on to explain sexual immorality in "boundary" terms:

"To invade another person's body, to cross over this person's boundaries, is the most basic act of abuse.... Sexual abuse is one of the most blatant examples of crossing boundaries...." (150)

"People who have been sexually abused may disown their bodies. They may feel that their bodies do not belong to them: they belong to their abusers.... They must work hard to regain their bodies again and declare dominion and authority over what is theirs." (150)

As Christians, *our bodies belong to the Lord* and are under *His* authority. We were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)! To say that we "own" our own bodies is to implicitly license sexual immorality, so long as one freely chooses to engage in it.

Other bodily "boundary" violations are discussed, such as physical abuse, excessive parental control over a child's body, or

refusal to admit physical pain. Again, the issue of *sin* is masked by explaining it in terms of "boundaries."

Feelings are another major area of boundary violation:

"Our feelings, whether good or bad, are our property. They fall within our boundaries. Our feelings are our responsibility; others' feelings are their responsibility. If we feel responsible for other people's feelings, we can no longer make decisions based on what is right; we will make decisions based on how others feel about our choices." (152)

This is the fear of man, not a "boundary" problem. Similarly:

"If we feel responsible for other people's displeasure, we are being controlled by others, not God. This is a basic boundary disturbance." (153)

Biblically, this is the fear of man. However, we must have proper biblical concern about others, not a callous disregard based on protecting our "boundaries." One of the fundamental problems with "boundaries" is that it tends to encourage a focus on self-protection rather than sacrificial love for others. This is particularly true in light of our fallen nature. Cloud does give some recognition to the necessity of considering others:

"We should always *be sensitive to others'* feelings about our choices. But we should never *take responsibility for* how they feel." (155)

This warning needs to be much more prominent in this type of literature! Also, when we truly sin against others and they are hurt, our responsibility is much greater.

It is interesting to note how Cloud judges his own speaking engagements by certain reactions from his audience:

"If the hurting people feel understood *and* if the noncompassionate, critical people hate me, I know I have done my job.... God is against proud, arrogant people who do not have compassion for hurting people." (153)

It is possible to have real compassion for hurting people *and* to hate the integration of biblical truth with pagan psychology. Cloud implies that the psychological way is the way of compassion. He assumes, also, that those opposed to his integration are proud,

arrogant, and lacking in compassion. This is clearly an improper judgment of the hearts of others.

In addition to feelings, Cloud covers the areas of attitudes, behavior, thoughts, abilities, choices, desires, and limitations, all based on this one concept of maintaining "boundaries." Here are some key quotes for each:

Attitudes: "When we begin to take responsibility for our own attitudes, we can be free from the expectations others put on us." (161)

Behavior: "Whenever anyone is not allowed to 'own' their own behavior, or suffer its consequences, boundaries are being crossed." (164)

Thoughts: "As with feelings and attitudes, we must own our own thoughts. Our thoughts have much bearing on our emotional growth." (168)

"We must not worry about what other people say about us, but we should pay close attention to what we think about ourselves. Self-condemning thoughts are clearly unbiblical." (170) It seems that the great "sin" of psychology is to think too little of oneself! The Bible is turned upside down.

Abilities: "We must stay within our boundaries, realizing our own abilities. People who cross boundaries in this area are in danger of feeling either false pride or false guilt.... In addition, we must not allow someone else to cross our boundaries and try to tell us what our abilities are." (171)

Choices: "Probably no area of crossed boundaries is as significant as this one. The essence of boundaries is taking responsibility, and the hub of responsibility is choice. God has given every human the ability to choose. When choice is taken away, something less than human remains, something less than the 'likeness of God.'" (171)

"The second way we cross boundaries is when we make others responsible for our choices." (176)

Note, however, that fallen man, in the unregenerate, *lost* the ability to choose God's ways (Romans 8:7-8).

Desires: "If we don't see our desires as our responsibility, we blame others for our deprivation." (178)

"Just as we must own our own desires, we must not own other's desires." (179)

Limitations: "If we have limitations of time, money, or energy, we must set those. If we extend them too far, it is our fault. At the same time we cannot decide where someone else's limits are." (180)

It seems that "boundaries" encompasses a broad spectrum, explaining every aspect of the inner man. This "catch all" needs serious questioning, particularly when such a concept is never expressed in Scripture as an explanation for the human heart.

Cloud also speaks here about setting limits on evil behavior:

"We all must be long-suffering and forgiving in relationships, but, at some point, long-suffering enables evil behavior to continue, and limits must be set." (181)

This is a section where we can largely agree. Cloud cites Matthew 18:15-18, and indeed, we are called to lovingly confront sin. It is important to emphasize, however, that this confrontation is done with concern for the *other* person's welfare, not *primarily* to protect oneself. The "boundaries" concept highlights self-concern more than concern for others.

Finally, we must note that Cloud's devotion to "boundaries" is such that one's theology must be changed, if necessary, to accommodate it:

"If people have a real need, such as love, freedom, responsibility, and their theology does not allow for it, the theology must be changed. Boundaries get crossed in thinking when people try to put their interpretations onto others, putting them in prison." (170)

Cloud quotes Matthew 23:4 as support. Here Jesus speaks about the pride and arrogant behavior of the Pharisees, who seek the applause of men and do not lovingly shepherd God's people. Certainly, we must acknowledge the real needs of others, and minister to one another in the body of Christ. However, Cloud doesn't distinguish here between true, biblically defined needs and *perceived* needs. Our perception of needs must be changed to agree with the theology revealed in Scripture, not the other way

around. Faithfulness to God and His Word assures that genuine needs will be abundantly met (Philippians 4:19). Psychotherapy, on the other hand, tends to create psychological "needs" which are pursued relentlessly and easily draw the individual away from serving Christ.

Conclusion. The whole idea of "boundaries" is one with a confusing mixture of truth and error. It is true that God, the Creator, is distinct from His creation, and that He defines Himself in terms of what He is and what He is not. It is also true that believers are called to be holy, set apart for God. Believers are to separate themselves from sin. There are also other distinctions to be maintained, such as truth/error, male/female, believer/unbeliever. However, it would be more accurate to speak in clear biblical terms about holiness, sin, and such, rather than to confuse matters by lumping it all under "boundaries" and "boundary violations."

"Developmental Task" #3: Sorting Out Good and Bad

Cloud believes that many people have trouble with the fact that both good and evil exist in the world:

"The world around us is good and bad. The people around us are good and bad. We are good and bad. Our natural tendency is to try and resolve the problem of good and evil by *keeping the good and the bad separated.*" (216)

Cloud says that this approach creates a "split" in the way we view self, others, and the world (216):

"This splitting results in an inability to tolerate badness, weakness, and failure in ourselves and others." (216)

Cloud says that we deny either the good or the bad, resulting in a view of self and others that is either "all good" or "all bad" (216). He believes that such a dichotomy results in serious problems of living:

"If we do not have the ability to tolerate and deal with the simultaneous existence of good and bad, we cannot successfully deal with and live in this world, for the world and we are precisely that: good and bad." (217)

Cloud takes us back to the beginning of the human race in order to understand the basics of the problem. He notes correctly that God created the world, including man, without sin. However:

"We were never made to live where we live now; that was a mistake.... We were not prepared to be imperfect. We don't have enough grace inside to anesthetize us against the pain of our own badness." (217-218)

It is a theological mystery as to why God, perfect in justice and holiness, has allowed sin to enter the picture. However, it's not a "mistake." God is sovereign. He is not the author of sin, yet, mysteriously, He has ordained that even our sin be used to accomplish His good purposes. Note the crucifixion! Furthermore, God's grace does not "anesthetize" us against "the pain of our own badness." Rather, His grace is designed for our *redemption*, for the forgiveness of sin. Never does Scripture present God's grace as an anesthetic! The true believer is keenly aware of the gravity of sin, but equally cognizant of the magnitude of God's grace.

Here is what Cloud says about the "ideal" self:

"We all have a distant memory of what we were meant to be." (219)

"Having ideal wishes about aspects of our lives is a part of being human. Those wishes are the lost potentials of the image of God within.... We are eager to have our lost ideal recovered; that longing is built into the very nature of who we are. It is who we were and who we will be one day." (221)

The first man, Adam, was without sin. However, as individuals born after the fall, we cannot rightly say that we ever "were" without sin. We have no "distant memory" of being without sin! Our individual memories do not extend back into the life of the first man, Adam, prior to his fall into sin. Believers can look forward to a time in the *future*, in eternity, when they will be without sin and the image of God is fully restored. But in no way can they look back to the *past*, in terms of their *individual* lives.

Meanwhile, Cloud also defines the "real" self:

"The real self is the one that we truly are, not the one we wish to be.... The reality of our situation is that our real self has fallen; the ideal has been lost.... In addition to our sinful aspects, we are weak." (221)

Furthermore, according to Cloud the "real" self is very much a victim of the sins of others:

"We are also broken. We have been injured in many ways, and our real self houses all of the evidences of those injuries. The pain, the brokenness, and the emotional underdevelopment we all possess is part of who we really are. Brokenness and immaturity are parts of our real selves." (222)

Cloud moves on to discuss the interaction between the "ideal" and "real" selves:

"We need to look at the relationship between the ideal self and the real self. If they are in conflict, there is going to be a perpetual war inside for center stage. Whenever the real self becomes apparent, the ideal self will judge it, and try to make it hide. And when we are hiding, we are not in relationship with God and others." (222)

"...the ideal judges the real as unacceptable and brings down condemnation and wrath on the real." (222)

Cloud sees this "split" as explaining the struggles of many believers:

"This split between the ideal and the real is one of the major reasons Christians struggle. The church often stresses such high ideals that many people feel they can't be human and still be Christian--an incredible belief when one thinks of why they came to Christ in the first place. They came because they were sinners in need of forgiveness and acceptance." (224)

We do still struggle with sin throughout this life. However, this statement fails to consider the Spirit's work of *sanctification* in the believer, and the exhortations given to Christians on the basis of Christ's victory over the power of sin. Also, Cloud borders on antinomianism, the tendency to be so accepting of sin that there are no longer standards of holiness among God's people. He does warn against both legalism and license (226), but his emphasis tends toward an easy acceptance of sin. Furthermore, the whole concept of "real" and "ideal" selves existing simultaneously is one that teaches an unbiblical splitting of the inner man. *We are whole persons before God*, not "real" and "ideal," or "inner child" and "adult," or some other dichotomy.

Cloud, however, moves on to discuss in detail the "relationship" between the "ideal" self and the "real" self, almost as if two separate people existed in the same body. He warns against a "judgmental tone" toward the real self:

"We will use shame, guilt, hiding, denial, splitting, and other defenses to hide the real self.... If we adopt a loving and accepting tone toward our real self, there is hope for transformation. If we are able to accept the parts of ourselves we do not feel are ideal, then those parts will be loved and healed." (224)

"When we can get to a point of 'no condemnation' [Romans 8:1] for the true self as it really is, we can confess what is wrong and be in relationship just as we are, with no pressure to be ideal.... The nature of the relationship, then, between the ideal and the real needs to be one of grace, of unconditional love and acceptance. If this is true, our house isn't divided." (225)

Cloud cites Paul's struggle in Romans 7. However, that text ends with an exclamation about the deliverance effected by *Christ*. There is absolutely no hint of an "ideal" self loving and accepting the "real" self. Cloud imposes his psychological theories onto this passage.

Citing Psalm 8:4-6, Romans 3:10, and Psalm 103:14, Cloud summarizes God's picture of us:

"He [God] says that we are incredibly wonderful, extremely sinful, beset with all sorts of weakness, and overflowing with talents.... The Bible teaches two themes throughout: the first is that we are created in the image of God and that we have incredible value. The second is that we are sinful and broken." (226)

Scripture says that we are *wonderfully created*, not "incredibly wonderful." What Cloud fails to bring out here, among other things, is the radical distinction between believer and unbeliever. The latter is spiritually dead in sins and trespasses (Ephesians 2), unwilling and unable to please God (Romans 8:7-8). The believer is being conformed to the image of Christ; he is a *new creation*. It is important to remember that man's purpose is to glorify *God*. Recognition of human talents and value should be focused on bringing glory to *God*, not building "self-esteem" or "self-worth." Because of the image of God in man, sin is

particularly grievous, and salvation is particularly marvelous. Psychologists blur this truth.

Even the "ideal" self has its problems in Cloud's teachings. He believes that the "ideal self" is a distortion of what God intended. For example, God created us to be in relationship with others, and some people fashion an "ideal" with no need for others (227). Not surprisingly, Cloud traces distortions to early childhood:

"Our perception of the ideal self comes largely from our upbringing.... The ideal self is not necessarily inerrant! It is a system of internalized values from our upbringing as well as our own wishes for ourselves." (227)

People often do create standards that differ from God's revelation; this is sin. Note, however, how Cloud departs from his earlier words wherein the "ideal" self is a return to the situation (without sin) prior to man's fall.

Returning to his "boundary" theme, Cloud says that:

"Another common example of distorting the content of the ideal self is calling boundary setting bad. Many people have had to repress their natural tendency to set limits on others because this was not acceptable in their family." (228)

Again, we need biblical thinking on such issues. People need to obey *God's* standards, which sometimes involves confronting and limiting the sins of others (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1ff). The issue is not "setting boundaries," but obedience to God and His Word.

Cloud emphasizes the "sin" of "denying the conflict between good and bad" in both self and others. He describes four main responses to this conflict:

1. Denial of the bad: This can include denial of bad emotions (229).

"The Bible sometimes speaks harshly about our tendency to deny our badness, for it is the sin of pride." (229)

2. Denial of the good: "The 'hardened sinner' has decided that is no ideal standard to live up to." (231)

3. Attack and judge: "The 'normal' conscience judges and condemns, saying things like, 'I'm so stupid, or worthless, or bad.' This angry attack on the real self is condemning and hurtful." Cloud equates this with the biblical concept of "worldly sorrow," such as Judas experienced. (231)

4. Acceptance: "We accept and forgive the bad, while clinging to the ideal as an unrealized goal that we strive for in an atmosphere of full acceptance." This is what Cloud considers the biblical alternative, "grace and truth." (232)

Note how Cloud sometimes occasionally acknowledges sin, yet also wants to "accept" the bad. Forgiveness involves acknowledgment of sin, but never "acceptance" of it. God *accepts* believers because of the supreme penalty paid by Christ on the cross. But He does not *accept* our sin; He provides atonement and forgives it!

Cloud returns again to his implication that sin is completely outside the sovereign plan of God:

"We were never intended to handle the co-existence of good and bad. God tried to protect us from it. But we sinned anyway and found ourselves in a tough spot. The reason is this: *Having been born without knowledge of grace, we need to internalize grace in order to learn how to accept the bad without rejecting relationship.* The Bible says that we are born without relationship and must be invited into relationship." (233)

This emphasizes something *internal*, without much about the objective work of Christ. It is therefore not a complete portrait of redemption. Because of sin, we are indeed separated from God. It is Christ, through His work on the cross, who reconciles us to God so that there *is* a relationship. Note also the inadequate view of God presented here. God is viewed as lacking in power, "trying" to protect us but without success. There are deep theological mysteries surrounding the fall of man and the entrance of sin into the world, but we must nevertheless affirm God's sovereignty.

Cloud slips into serious error when he speaks about the condition of an infant:

"When a child comes into the world, she is unconscious of being forgiven. As a result, she herself is unforgiving. Grace and truth, or love and limits, are split apart." (234)

There is surely a theological problem here with the idea of being "unconscious" of God's forgiveness! Unbelievers are *not* forgiven. There is a real point in time when the individual is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, exercises saving faith, and is justified.

Cloud's view of "good and bad" is one that borders on embracing sin:

"When our frailties are understood and loved by others, we learn to accept them into our picture of ourselves and to value the *real* self, which is not perfect, grandiose, or ideal." (236)

Certainly, we must treat others with humility and respect. However, we are not to love "frailties," either in ourselves or others, if that term includes *sin*.

In terms of the consequences of sin, Cloud focuses primarily on self rather than God:

"Only when we get a picture of the self-destructive nature of our sin do we begin to change. Guilt manipulation does not work; it only makes us sin all the more.... It is only when we are no longer condemned for the bad that we can let go of it." (238)

Sin is self-destructive, but even more, sin is primarily against God (Psalm 51). When we sin, we fail to glorify our Creator.

Christians do continue to struggle with sin. Here is what Cloud has to say about that battle:

"Many Christians stay on the old merry-go-round, where they think they go from a forgiven state to a guilty state, back to a forgiven state, and so on.... If we are hurting someone, God, or ourselves, this sin will grieve us if we do not focus on our guilt. That grief, called godly sorrow, will move us not to punish ourselves or anyone else but to take care of the one being hurt. This is the essence of a love-based morality, instead of a fear-and-punishment-based morality prescribed by the law." (240)

Good theology, not psychology, can clear the problems described here. Christ's work of redemption is complete, such that there is no eternal condemnation for believers. God is no longer the Judge, but now the Father of the Christian. The believer who sins does so as His child rather than His enemy. The enemy surrenders;

the child submits. There is ongoing repentance and forgiveness in the life of the Christian, but never a loss of eternal standing. God forgives as a loving Father forgiving a disobedient child. Furthermore, we need not make the sharp separation that Cloud makes between love-based and fear-and-punishment based morality. Christ has done the legal work of pleasing God, in bearing the penalty prescribed for sin and also living a perfect life. Because He has made that legal satisfaction, one that is grounded in God's love, we can now enjoy a relationship with the Father that is not based on fear of punishment. We can live to please God because of the love He has demonstrated in sending Christ to die for our sins. We don't need psychological teachings encumbered by a lax view of sin. Rather, we need solid biblical teaching about redemption, accomplished by Christ and applied to our lives by His Spirit.

Failure to "accept good and bad." Cloud lists a number of results when people are unable to "deal with" the mixture of good and bad in the world (242): perfectionism, idealism, inability to tolerate badness (or weakness or negative emotions), emotional problems, "self-image" problems, anxiety, panic, eating or substance abuse, narcissism, guilt, sexual "addiction," broken relationships, rage, views of self as "all bad" or "all good" (242-246). Sexual immorality, previously "explained" in terms of "boundaries," is also "explained" by Cloud's view of accepting good and bad:

"Many people who compulsively act out sexually are running from lost ideals and from unprocessed pain." (245)

Feeling good about oneself is a key theme, as in most psychological literature:

"The only way people can feel good about themselves, can have a good self-image, is to have the real self loved unconditionally." (244)

In listing "barriers to resolving good and bad" (246), Cloud's analysis is similar to what he says about the obstacles to creating "boundaries." He talks about "distorted thinking" concerning self, God, and others. For example: "I am really not worth loving" (246), "I am unforgivable" (247), or the opposite extreme, "I am ideal" (247).

This flies in the face of Scripture. When Isaiah, a righteous man by human standards, was confronted with the holiness of God, he didn't "feel good about himself." Rather, any "good

self-image" he previously enjoyed was completely flattened! He saw himself clearly in the light of God's holiness, and he was utterly dismayed. God graciously restored him and commissioned him to a powerful ministry, but never did God suggest that he ought to unconditionally accept his sinful self!

In looking at distortions of God, Cloud does recognize the once-for-all nature of salvation, as well as the fact that God *knows* us completely (249-250). This truth would be strengthened, however, by focusing on what *Christ* has done on our behalf. As our covenant representative, He has paid the penalty for sin and He has lived a righteous life. His righteousness is credited to us; we are "in Christ." It is because of *His* work, representing us before the Father, that we are accepted and saved from eternal condemnation. Cloud doesn't openly deny these truths, but as noted earlier, his efforts to help struggling people would be far more effective if undergirded by sound theology rather than the teachings of modern psychology, where "acceptance" is not grounded in the Person and work of Christ, but rather on overlooking God's holy standards.

Acceptance of good and bad. Cloud states that "a wrong relationship between the real and the ideal comes from two sources: nature and nurture" (252). The first of these is our sinful nature.

"We are born with a 'wish to be like God' (Genesis 3:6-7; Isaiah 14:13-14)." (252-253)

Secondly, however:

"We internalize our parents' critical natures into a self-evaluating system that we call our conscience, and it speaks to us in much the same way that our parents did." (253)

The desire to "be like God" is *not* a psychological failure to "accept good and bad." It has to do with sinful autonomy, with the failure to submit to God's authority.

Cloud seems far more concerned with the tendency toward excessive criticism, rather than with assuming a lax attitude toward sin. This is seen in his concern about "internalizing" the critical nature and evaluation of a parent. He sees "forgiving relationships within the church" as being able to "cure the problem of splitting good and bad" (253). Certainly, we are to extend mercy and compassion to other believers, knowing that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. However, we must

also take God's standards of holiness very seriously. Psychologists miss the boat here!

Confession of our sins, to God and others, is Cloud's first recommendation. Although the basic concept is certainly biblical, Cloud's comments are not. He says that:

"Much pain comes from our inability both to confess our sins to other people and to feel loved and forgiven by them.... We begin to internalize the acceptance we feel from others, and our conscience changes: it becomes more loving." (254)

The concern here with *feeling* forgiven receives more emphasis than *actual* forgiveness from God and others.

Besides feelings, Cloud is particularly concerned with *hiding* of the "real" self:

"The Fall separated us from God, ourselves, and others. As a result, aspects of ourselves are hidden 'in the darkness.' We hide from God, ourselves, and others, and they get worse.... When we confess to God, this buried part comes into relationship with him, and he can begin to cleanse and heal it." (254)

People do hide...from God's judgment. We hide sins, not "aspects of ourselves." Scripture does not indicate that some "buried part" of oneself enters into relationship with God at the point of confession. He forgives our sins and cleanses us from unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The believer is *already* in relationship with God (the *whole* person!), although intimate fellowship is temporarily broken by sin.

Confession of sins to one another is an area that Cloud addresses:

"The Bible commands us to confess to one another. Anything short of this is pride. We do not want to reveal our real self because we want to appear to be perfect, or all good." (254)

This needs strong qualification. We are to confess specifically to those we have sinned against, but not indiscriminately--not all sins to all people! Cloud does offer a qualification, but based on very different criteria:

"This does not mean that we are to confess to just anyone. This is dangerous. We need to confess to those who love us and can offer us the grace of God as his incarnational ambassadors." (255)

We need to confess to *those we have sinned against*, regardless of whether these individuals are loving or not. Confession is not primarily a means of seeking personal relief. Rather, its purpose is to reconcile with others, to make biblical restitution, and to honor God.

Forgiveness is another very biblical concept, but Cloud's view distorts the truth of Scripture:

"Some who have received grace still want repayment from others. We must forgive others' debts in order to be healed.... Bitterness and holding a grudge will forever connect you to your abuser. When we can sever that tie through forgiveness, and then accept those who have hurt us as God has accepted us, then we are free to integrate our own 'bad' and unforgiven parts." (257)

This is the typical self-centered view of forgiveness found in psychological literature. Forgiveness is granted for the other person's sake, not to accomplish "healing" or freedom from the abuser, nor to "integrate" our "bad" parts. Our forgiveness of others is to be modeled after God's forgiveness of us. God does not forgive in order to sever connections with us, or to "integrate" "bad" parts (a blasphemous idea), or to free Himself from bitterness.

Another key recommendation is to "integrate" one's negative emotions:

"Many people conceal their negative feelings...they have never processed these negative feelings...." (257)

Like many psychologists, Cloud warns against the "suppression" of anger:

"When people are taught to suppress their anger, they are taught to be out of touch with what matters to them.... Instead of denying anger, we must own it and find its source. As we examine our anger, we can find out what we are trying to protect." (257-258)

Sadness is another one:

"Sadness helps us grieve and let go. If we repress and deny sadness, we will inevitably become depressed." (259)

Cloud also insists that such "denial" leads to insensitivity and numerous other problems (259).

Still another emotion to be "integrated" is fear:

"If we are not aware of our fear, we cannot make this choice [as the Bible commands!] to trust in God, and thus stay even further away. And sometimes, the root of the fear is something other than a lack of trust." (261)

Cloud discusses certain skills needed to "integrate" good and bad: prayer, "rework" the ideal, "rework" distortions, monitor the relationship between the "ideal" and "real" selves, practice loving the "less than ideal" in others, accept others when they are not perfect, "process" and value negative feelings, expect badness and weakness in others, expect faults from the creation (262-264).

Certainly, we are not called to *lie* about our emotions. Emotions are *one* aspect of the inner man, arising out of the heart. They can be either godly or ungodly, and must be examined in accordance with biblical standards. The psychological way views emotions as morally neutral and tends to exalt them above other aspects of the inner man.

Conclusion. We do live in a world that is marred by sin. Yet God has graciously planned the redemption of His people, and renewal of His creation (Romans 8). As Christians, we acknowledge the sin in the world, but we live with the hope of a glorious eternity where all the powers of evil will be destroyed once and for all. Cloud's psychological "integration" of good and bad falls short of the biblical view, which is both realistic in terms of the present time, and assured of a future eternal glory (Romans 8:18).

"Developmental Task" #4: Becoming an Adult

This final "task" is described in terms of moving from childhood status into adulthood, which Cloud characterizes primarily in terms of exercising authority, including aspects such as:

"...power, expertise, office, influence, and submission. Adults have the *power* or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions." (271)

As we will see, there is a frustrating mixture of biblical truth and psychological error in this section. The error occurs largely in Cloud's consideration of adolescence.

Cloud says initially that:

"We are all born children under adult authority, and over time we are to become authorities ourselves and be in charge of our lives.... Becoming an adult is assuming the authority position of life, an important part of the image of God." (271)

Cloud further describes man's functioning in the image of God:

"In terms of functioning in the image of God, we need to have command over our lives and the domain God has given us, officiate a role or office when asked, influence out of real ownership of something, have expertise, and submit to the authority of God and others without conflict." (271)

Cloud rightly notes the biblical basis, in Genesis 1:26 & 28, for man's authority over the rest of creation (276), noting the important truth that man remains in submission to God:

"The one condition to this lofty position of authority was submission to a higher authority: God." (276)

"As God is an authority [the ultimate authority], we are to be authorities as his image bearers." (278)

Also commendable is Cloud's recognition of the authority God grants to ordained church officers:

"We are to respect the offices of the church. We are to think of other people as equal siblings with us under God, even if they have an office. *To submit to them is to submit to God, not to people.*" (273)

In addition, Cloud mentions that God establishes authority lines in the home and the government (278).

However, in spite of some excellent statements about proper submission, Cloud places an emphasis on "taking charge" of one's own life:

"Adults don't need 'permission' from some other person to think, feel, or act. And adults are accountable for the consequences of the things they think, feel, and do.... Becoming an adult is a process of gaining authority over our lives." (275)

Cloud believes that God has granted man a measure of autonomy, though he does acknowledge limitations:

"God grants us a lofty position of rulership and authority, of adulthood and responsibility, of freedom to be 'in charge' of our lives. Along with this comes the responsibility of submitting to God's authority and accountability if we fail.... Maybe you can feel the individual consequences of your failure to take authority over the domain God has given you to manage." (277)

Cloud notes Adam and Eve's defiance of *God's* authority, but also emphasizes their failure to properly *assume* authority.

God has, indeed, given to man a wonderful role of stewardship over His creation, as outlined so beautifully in Psalm 8. It is true that Adam should have exercised his authority over Eve and not taken the forbidden fruit from her, and it is also true that Eve should have exercised authority over the serpent. Cloud notes rightly the enslavement that resulted from the fall:

"...after the Fall of Adam and Eve, we were no longer in a free position to take authority over life. Instead, we became slaves, with sin having authority over us." (277)

The redemption of believers includes a restoration of the position that was lost. We will reign with Christ (Revelation 20). Cloud correctly notes this aspect of redemption:

"Redemption is a reversal of the effects of the Fall--a return to the freedom and authority we had in the beginning...to be united with Jesus is to be restored to a real position of authority that cannot fail." (278)

Citing 1 Corinthians 15:22-28:

"This is the plan of redemption. Christ would get back what God lost by taking authority; then he would give it back to God, submitting to his authority." (280)

We should note here, however, that God has never "lost" His position of authority or His control. He will, however, conquer every enemy, the final enemy being death.

Cloud notes rightly that authority involves being a servant of others:

"An important part of being an authority like Jesus is to be able to give up rights and serve others. He submitted to the cross and to his Father. We are to model Jesus' submission; it is an important aspect of authority resolution." (283)

Indeed, leaders in the home, church, and elsewhere are to exercise their leadership with sacrificial love.

Cloud goes on to discuss authority from a "developmental" perspective:

"The power a child needs to live out his adult responsibilities later comes from an early identification with authority." (285)

It is not surprising that Cloud sees all sorts of problems arising out of parental failures in this area:

"If a parent uses power harshly and cruelly, the child develops a hate relationship with power and can't internalize it without conflict." (286)

"If a child's model is passive, she doesn't learn a sense of personal power, and this can be disastrous." (286)

"A child who is treated harshly for failure becomes afraid of trying. Fear of failure often comes from an authority figure's harsh reprimand for a mistake." (289)

"Children who are raised in situations where authority has no power learn neither to respect authority nor to identify with it." (291)

Here is what Cloud recommends:

"A child develops expertise as his individual strengths and talents are recognized and built up by his parents." (288)

"Parents need to treat their children with understanding and patience as they practice new skills." (289)

He does recognize, rightly, the authority God extends to parents:

"An office is a position of authority or trust. Because they hold the *office* of parent, parents have authority to enforce consequences." (290)

Parents are entrusted with a position of authority to care for and discipline their children. They are not to abuse that position. However, we cannot assume the cause and effect relationship posed by psychologists, such that sinful adult behavior is "explained" by the actions of one's parents.

Adolescence. So far, we have seen some biblical truths in what Cloud says about adulthood. However, he steers away from that truth in his discussion of adolescence. He says that:

"Adolescence is the beginning of the undoing of the yoke of slavery called childhood.... The Bible compares childhood to slavery, because a child does not yet legally own his or her own life." (291)

"The child, or near-adult, has one foot in each camp, and she is in the process of overthrowing authority and becoming her own person. Adolescence is the time of questioning authorities and choosing things for oneself." (292)

Where is this in the Bible? Even the adolescent remains under the biblical authority of parents. Rebellion against authority established by God is never condoned in Scripture. The comparison of childhood with slavery is used to describe the progress of the *gospel* in Galatians. A radical change occurred at the coming of Christ. God's people were never called to *overthrow* His authority. It was God who initiated the changes by sending Christ, and by opening the mystery of the *gospel* to the Gentiles. The passage in Galatians, to which Cloud alludes, cannot be pressed into service as a license for adolescent rebellion. But Cloud's teaching becomes progressively worse:

"The adolescent passage is when we overthrow the legalistic structures that interfere with our relationship with God. We need to chisel away at the authority of our parents as

godlike figures so that God can be our parent. In short, we need to put aside our parents, so that we can be *adopted* by God. If we have never gone through that process, we will suffer from spiritual childhood and not be able to get out from under the law and the slavery of the rules." (296)

There is a big problem here. Our adoption as children of God (Ephesians 1) occurs at the time of saving faith, regardless of chronological age. The five-year-old child, who is regenerated and exercises saving faith, is truly *adopted* as God's child, just as surely as anyone else of any age. Adoption as God's child is not linked anywhere in Scripture to overthrowing parental authority. Cloud, however, insists that slavery to the "basic principles of the world," in Galatians 4:1, is equated with "parental structure" (297). This is not what Paul means! Such a thought is foreign to the text in Galatians. Yet Cloud presses on with even more unbiblical thoughts:

"If we have never questioned the authority of our earthly parents, the givers of the first law, we can't question the authority of the law itself and reject its ability to save us.... Like Paul, we must reject the notion that, by obeying parental structures, we can save ourselves [citing Romans 3:20]." (297)

God gave the law, not parents! We are not to question the authority of God's law, which is good and holy. Rather, we are to understand that our keeping of the law is not the ground for eternal salvation. Recognition of that truth has nothing whatsoever to do with questioning of parental authority.

Similarly:

"They [adolescents] often run into problems with parents, for their interests may not be what the parents want for them. Parents need to lose this battle, or they will lose worse in the end. Children begin to make choices, and their choices need to be respected." (293)

"Teens also struggle with values. For the first time, they are in a position to question what their parents have taught them to be true. They need to question the things Mom and Dad believe and come up with their own reasons for faith and other values." (294)

Certainly, faith in Christ is an individual matter; it isn't inherited. However, where does Scripture affirm that teens

necessarily *need* to question the faith and values of their parents? Consider the book of Proverbs, whose primary audience is young people in late adolescence or early adulthood (Proverbs 1:4). These individuals are advised to consider wise counsel, which is identified in terms of *parental* counsel (Proverbs 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1, 6:1, 7:1). Cloud, however, assumes the loss of parental control during these years:

"If parents have built up a good relationship with their child over the years, they can try to exert their influence over the child during this time period. But they will have little control. By this time, the child is big enough and mobile enough to do pretty much what he or she wants to do."
(292)

In some cases, certainly, parents who have failed to exercise authority will be physically unable to restrain an older child. However, that does not negate their biblical authority, nor does Scripture endorse adolescent rebellion. There is an element of truth in Cloud's writings, in that children are under the biblical authority of their parents (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:10), yet a new household is formed when the man *leaves* his father and mother and cleaves to his wife (Genesis 2:24). Unfortunately, Cloud assumes that teenage children must *rebel* against the authority of their parents. There is no consideration as to whether or not the child has *godly* parents. Furthermore, rebellion against biblically defined authority is not an attitude that Scripture commends. A person under authority can *respectfully* insist on obeying God rather than man where there is a conflict. A grown child can *respectfully* make his own decisions based on God's standards.

Another error is Cloud's insistence on the equation of "black-and-white" thinking with childhood, and his belief that the adult must abandon it:

"When people begin to reason as adults, and not as black-and-white-thinking children, mystery and ambiguity become more acceptable, and love becomes most important." (302)

"Black-and-white" thinking is not necessarily wrong! Much of Scripture *is* black and white, such as the way of wisdom and the way of folly contrasted in Proverbs, or the wicked man contrasted with the godly man in Psalm 1. We do, however, encounter theological mystery. What does need to be noted is that our eternal salvation is not based on works of the law, or works of love, but rather on the completed work of Christ. "Legalism" is

not equivalent to black-and-white thinking, or to acknowledging God's law as good and holy, or to recognizing that God's standard is absolute righteousness. Rather, it is the belief that eternal salvation can be *earned* by human works or merit. Cloud contrasts theology based on the law with theology based on love (302). However, there is no such contrast in Scripture. As noted previously, *Christ* fulfilled the law on our behalf, and His righteousness is credited to believers. God provided this gracious gift for us out of His love. Good theology is based on *both* law *and* love; out of His *love*, *Christ* fulfilled the *law* so that God might justify the ungodly without compromising His perfect justice (Romans 3:21-31).

Failure to "grow up." Cloud lists a number of "signs of [the] inability to achieve adulthood," including: excessive need for approval, fear of disapproval, guilt, sexual struggles, fear of failure, need for permission, "you can't do that" syndrome, inferiority feelings, competitiveness, loss of power, unequal differences, black-and-white thinking, judgmentalism, anxiety, impulsiveness, inhibition, superiority, hatred of authority figures, parenting others, depression, dependency, idealization of authority, idealization of childhood (305-317). Like the "boundaries" concept, this one seems to catch just about anything and everything!

Biblically, much of this is the *fear of man*, which Scripture contrasts with trust in the Lord. Overall, a great deal of *sin* is explained in terms of psychological disorder, thus clouding biblical responsibility.

Guilt, a prime area of biblical concern, is totally distorted by Cloud's psychological analysis. For him, experiencing guilt is a sign of failure to achieve adulthood:

"Guilt always has as a component the loss of parental approval. Therefore, wherever one struggles with guilt, one still feels 'under' the parental voice. The internal parent has not been dethroned so that it can't punish. Guilt keeps the focus off the consequences. An adult conscience lives life according to real consequences, not guilt." (306)

There is serious misunderstanding here about the biblical nature of guilt, which is objectively defined according to God's standards, not "the loss of parental approval." Cloud confuses guilt with sorrow over sin. That sorrow can be godly or ungodly. Godly sorrow does not merely focus on the consequences! It is ungodly, worldly sorrow that is concerned only with consequences.

Godly sorrow is concerned with the offense to God, and it leads to repentance and life (2 Corinthians 7:10-11). Psychological literature all too often mutilates the concept of guilt.

As in the "boundary" and other areas of this book, the author lists several "barriers to becoming an adult" (318ff). Distorted views of self, God, and others are listed (318-319). Each of the "distorted" statements listed needs evaluation in *biblical* terms. For example:

"God does not allow me freedom to choose some of my own values. They are all prescribed in the Bible. There are no gray areas." (319)

God has given us "everything necessary for life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3-4) in His Word. He does, certainly, often allow choices between biblically acceptable alternatives (such as the choice of a spouse). Also, some theological issues are more clear than others. But God does govern all of life, and the Scripture is authoritative as well as *sufficient* to define our basic values.

Becoming a mature adult. Cloud lists a number of "skills for becoming an adult" (322ff).

1. Reevaluate beliefs. "The time is past for 'inherited beliefs'; it is time for an adult faith." (322) However, we must still submit to the authority of God's Word.

2. Disagree with authority figures. "Be honest about your disagreements with others. Most people have disagreements with authority figures, but they are afraid to admit to themselves how strongly they disagree." (322)

We might begin by disagreeing with all of the "Christian psychology" on the market, rather than gobbling up what the latest "expert" has to say!

3. See parents and authority figures realistically. "Knock parents and other authority figures off the pedestal you've put them on. See their weaknesses as well as their strengths." (323)

4. Make your own decisions. "If people in your life are telling you what to think, believe, do, or buy, start making those decisions yourself.... Giving advice or feedback and confronting is good, but parenting other adults is bad. Avoid people who take away your freedom as redeemed and

adopted sons and daughters of God and who want to become your parents." (323)

5. Practice disagreeing. "Learn to be equal with those who have assigned themselves as gods in your life, or to whom you have given this exalted position." (324)

6. Deal with your sexuality. "If you are prudish or embarrassed by sex, your parents may still be looking down their noses at your sexuality, or at least that's the way you are perceiving it." (324)

7. Give yourself permission to be equal with your parents. "Many authority problems have as their kernel the inability to assume the role held by the same-sex parent." (325)

8. Recognize and pursue talents. "To become an adult requires that you own and recognize the talents and gifts God has given you." (325)

9. Practice. "You can't learn to be an authority and have expertise in an area if you don't have the freedom to practice and learn. Give yourself permission to fail." (326)

10. Recognize the privileges of adulthood. "Adults have freedom to choose their own talents, values, beliefs, relationship with God, tastes, friends, and church.... They can be themselves." (327)

11. Discipline yourself. "If you lacked discipline when growing up, you may need to learn discipline now." (327)

12. Gain authority over evil. "The Word and the power of Jesus' name is enough for you to bind the forces of evil as they present themselves, and if you do not know how to do this, it is probably important at some point to learn about spiritual warfare." (327-328)

Scripture does not instruct us to "bind" the forces of evil. Rather, we are to *resist* the devil and he will flee (James). We are engaged in spiritual warfare, but our weapons in that battle are prayer, God's Word, the gospel, righteousness (Ephesians 6).

13. Submit to others out of freedom. "An important aspect of becoming an adult is to learn to submit to others in love,

without an authority conflict. This includes government, spouses, friends, evil people, bosses, and God." (328)

14. Do good works. Cloud cites Ephesians 2:10 here. Indeed, we were created in Christ Jesus for good works.

15. Become a "Pharisee buster." "Let go of the ways you are trying to earn approval; they can only eat away at your soul." (329)

16. Appreciate mystery and the unknown. "One of the hallmarks of people with authority problems is their inability to tolerate mystery and the unknown." (329) Cloud mentions God's transcendence and incomprehensibility. Indeed, there is mystery beyond the limits of finite human intelligence. However, the inability to tolerate mystery should not be explained away through psychological categories.

17. Love and appreciate people who are different. "When you can appreciate other people who are different from you, you have stopped sibling rivalry--the childhood battle of trying to be the better child to win parental approval--and have begun to assume an equal stance with your adult brothers and sisters." (330)

This list is a mixed bag, with some truth, but more centered on establishing independence than on pursuing godliness. On the whole, Cloud's analysis of adulthood, while affirming some biblical truth, misleads the reader in the direction of rebellion and autonomy. Far more emphasis on *God's* authority is needed.

Conclusion: Cloud's Commitment to Psychotherapy

Biblical truth is sprinkled throughout Cloud's writings, but clearly, the teachings of psychotherapy take precedence:

"Anytime someone's theology will not allow them to help someone who is hurting, their theology is not big enough to hold the love of God.... A spiritual leader once told me that if the only way an autistic child could be helped was through the intervention of therapy, it must be God's will for this child to suffer! He said he could not see therapy condoned in the Scriptures, and if this were what the child needed, it must be God's will for the child to stay cut off from love and relationship!" (301)

This reasoning is highly flawed. Cloud assumes that therapy actually does help; however, he doesn't clearly define what kind of help. If autism is physiologically based, Scripture does not preclude *therapy* that is medically based. It is *talk therapy*, based on the theories of godless men, that we must avoid. Faithfulness to God's Word, and avoidance of ungodly counsel, does not cause any person to be "cut off from love and relationship." Cloud's statement sounds compassionate, but there is confused, illogical reasoning inherent in it.

An important admission occurs at the conclusion of the book:

"There is no such thing as either an emotional problem or a spiritual problem. We all have broken relationships with God, others, and ourselves. Because of this brokenness, we develop symptoms that are felt on an emotional level and lived out in our spiritual lives." (333)

It is significant here to note the admission that "emotional problems," supposedly the exclusive territory of psychologists, are not a category distinct from *spiritual* problems. God's Word claims sufficiency for the problems of the *entire* inner man (2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Cloud, however, evidently believes that his approach is "deeper" because it goes beyond merely considering the "symptoms":

"Our symptoms are not the problem. For years Christians have focused on the symptoms and not the issues. As a result, healing has been superficial." (334)

All too often, counsel that centers on obedience to God's Word is considered "superficial." However, it is the role of God's Spirit, using His powerful, living Word (Hebrews 4:12-13), to examine and sanctify the inner man. Humans who give counsel are not qualified to perform this sort of transformation. The attempt to do so is only *one* of the many problems with psychotherapy.

Cloud's conclusion to *Changes That Heal* assumes that his four psychologically based "developmental tasks" are the key a full life involving service to others:

"The fully functioning person is one who takes his bonded, separate, forgiving, adult self into the world and denies that self for the sake of others. We have seen how this does not mean being without a person inside; it means having such a full one that it can be imparted to others." (334)

"Work on your ability to attach to others so that you can have your empty heart filled. Work on setting boundaries so you can own your own life. Work on confessing and receiving forgiveness so you can develop your real personhood. Work on assuming adulthood so you can be an authority. Then, go out and give it to others." (335)

As we have examined, these four categories are flawed in many ways, even though *some* biblical truth has been affirmed. As believers, we have the *whole counsel* of God in His Word. We cannot reduce sanctification to "four developmental tasks" or any other numbered pattern (such as the 12-step approach). We must immerse ourselves in God's Word and trust His Spirit to perform the delicate inner work on our hearts. The methodology of modern psychology produces changes that *hurt*, keeping many people in bondage, rather than changes that "heal."

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