And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish\textsuperscript{23} one another (Romans 15: 14 emphasis mine).

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\footnotesize\textsuperscript{1} Formerly known as \textit{NOUTHETIC COUNSELING}.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{2} Noutheteō 'means to put in mind, admonish' according to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{3} Adams takes his book's title \textit{Competent to Counsel} (1970) from a translation by Charles B. Williams, \textit{A Translation in the Language of the People}. 
Introduction & History

Jay Adams is part of the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition (e. g., MacPherson, 1881). Hence, he is a Calvinist subscribing to the Westminster Confession (1642-44). One relevant aspect of the Westminster Confession for our purposes was that an article about the Scriptures was the first article in the confession. That positioning marked a new order in Reformed Confessions and has had the particular effect of orienting Presbyterian thought to give a supreme place to scripture to the detriment, so might say, of the prominence of other aspects of Christian teaching such as God, the Holy Trinity.

As a tradition, it tends to be cessationist with regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which means it teaches that the gifts ceased after the apostolic period. Therefore, the tradition is (usually) strongly opposed to Pentecostal, Charismatic and ‘Third Wave’ teachings re the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1. As a pastor, Adams had an interest in cng from the beginning, particularly after an incident in which he believed he failed to help a member of his congregation who later died. Adams believed he had received little help in seminary to prepare him.

2. He was tempted to fall into the habit of referring troubled souls to non-Christian psychiatrists but worried about the ethics of doing that. For example, Scriptures say, ‘Blessed is the man who walks not after the counsel of the ungodly’. How can this statement be reconciled with going to a non-Christian psychiatrist?

3. He did graduate work in cng with a Freudian-based teacher but this approach frustrated him because it did not seem to work.

4. Adams began to use a hit-and-miss approach with direct on-the-spot biblical exhortations. He says, ‘the more directive I became . . . the more people were helped’ (p. xiii).

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4 Adams’ approach can be understood as an exhortatory one.
5. He was asked to teach a course at Westminster Theological Seminary on the shepherding work of the pastor. He decided to exegete every Biblical passage related to the counselling of personal problems. He began to consider the psychosomatic effects of guilt outlined in Psalms 31, 38, and 51. Additionally, he found James 5: 14-16 focussed on the ‘importance of confession of sin, as well as the use of medicine, in the healing of some physical illnesses’ (p. xiv). This importance of confession raised the need for pastoral confrontation. Adams also began to reason that if sinful behaviour is sometimes responsible for physical illness might it not also be responsible for mental illness? He also began to ask whether mental illness existed at all. What the psychiatric books call illness, the Word of God describes as sin. For example, homosexuality was at that time described as an illness and blamed on factors over which the person had no control. Adams reasoned that perhaps all the conditions classified as illnesses might in fact be sins.

6. Adams then read two works of O. Hobart Mowrer: The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion, and The New Group Therapy. These books affected Adams greatly and led him to correspond with Mowrer which in turn led Mowrer to invite Adams to participate in a research program with him for two months.

7. Mowrer’s position emphasised that:
   a) person is responsible for his behaviour
   b) hence, confession of deviant behaviour is required to others who have been wronged; to make restitution where possible
   c) Mowrer used a group format. (Adams later came to oppose this.)
   d) opposed medical model because it takes away from counsellee the sense of personal responsibility. Mowrer proposed Moral Model of responsibility. Counsellee’s problems are moral not medical. Person suffers from real guilt for violating his own conscience, not guilt feelings (false guilt). Basic problem is not emotional but behavioural.
   e) Mowrer used scriptural-like language but was actually a humanist who wanted the transcendent direction of the Ss removed for them to be acceptable!

8. Adams worked these ideas into a ‘Biblical framework’. Expressly distances himself from Mowrer and Glasser, acknowledging the unbiblical presuppositions of each. He also says, Christians may thank

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Note this procedure which is consistent with a belief that the Bible’s words are sufficient for ‘man’s salvation, faith and life’ (Westminster Confession ch 1-VI, italics mine). However, the confession does allow for the fact that church government ‘which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed’.
God that in his providence he has used Mowrer and others to awaken us to the fact that the "mentally ill" can be helped. But Christians must turn to the Scriptures to discover how God (not Mowrer) says to do it (p. xviii).
He is thankful for Mowrer’s critique of the lack of responsibility in both Freudian and Rogerian therapy but is obviously concerned about Mowrer’s non-Christian view of responsibility which amounts to a subjectivist position whereby each person becomes his own standard.

9. Adams employs an ‘avowedly evangelistic milieu’ in which conversions occur.

10. He accepts Bible as inerrant, as the norm for all faith and practice. However, he realises that his own interpretations are not infallible. Also, he believes that science is ‘a useful adjunct for the purposes of illustrating, filling in generalizations with specifics, and challenging wrong human interpretations of Scripture, thereby forcing the student to restudy the Scriptures’ (p. xxi).

First Seven Chapters of Competent to Counsel

Chapter 1: Christianity and Psychiatry Today
See under later group work heading

Chapter 11: The Holy Spirit and Counseling
Cng is the work of the Spirit and cannot be done apart from Him. Adams (1970) discusses the use of the term paraclētos, (Jn 14: 16f) [a notoriously difficult term to translate in all its fullness], with reference to the Spirit and with Christ Himself (Isa 9: 6, Wonderful Counsellor).

The Holy Spirit is holy because of ‘his nature and his work’ (p. 20). All the traits that contribute to counselling (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) are the fruit of the Spirit, the result of his work in us. We cannot conjure up these things by our own efforts.
The Holy Spirit works through means. Preaching, the sacraments, prayer, and fellowship are "the principal vehicles through which he brings about such changes" (p. 21f).

We note in passing that this list is a reduced number of means because the gifts of the Spirit are missing. The Spirit uses more than the means Adams lists to do God's will.

He claims that attempts to generate change without reference to the Spirit are rebellion against God. This comment seems to be aimed at both Christians and non-Christians.

But, can we honestly argue that those ignorant of God's Spirit are working in rebellion against Him if they seek to help others? Does not God do His Work through those who do not know Him? Irenaeus, I think, used the bold picture of God the Father working in the world through his two hands, the Son and the Spirit. In agreement with him, Luther remarked that God milks the cows in the earth through the hands of the milkmaids!

Adams then argues that the primary meaning of the notion that the Holy Spirit works by means of His (written) Word is that counsellors ought to use the Bible in counselling.

This breathtaking jump is a non-sequitur. The Spirit does work through the Scriptures but we cannot logically conclude from that that He only works that way. For example, however we understand the Spirit’s part in creation it was certainly not through Holy Scripture!

Note that Adams has reduced the number of means that the Spirit uses to the written word for counselling. In fact, in Adams, a

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6 However, he seems to miss the use of Spirit-inspired wisdom derived from living in God’s world.
7 Remember Cyrus the Persian king who liberated the Jews for captivity at the instigation of God (Ezra 1: 1). Cyrus is even called God's anointed or messiah (Isa 44: 28; 45: 1)!
8 The inference does not follow from the premises.
virtual identification exists between the written word and the work of the Holy Spirit. "Counseling without the scriptures can only be expected to be counseling without the Holy Spirit" (p. 24). For me, such counselling can only be congenial to those who are interpreting the scripture through the lens of the Westminster Confession. Scripture itself never teaches that it is the only way to hear God's will. The strongest statement re scripture found in 2 Tim 3:16 (which incidentally refers principally to the OT –see verse 15!) does not formulate a scripture-only position. It tells us scripture is profitable for 'all good works' in the light of the coming eschatological judgment (4:1) coming upon the evil works of deception (3:13) unsound doctrine and untruth (4:3-4).

What has happened to the fact that each of us is brought into being as part of a God-speaking creation? Adams seems to have no grasp of the implications of general revelation.

Chapter 111: What is Wrong with the 'Mentally Ill'?  
In chapter 3, he asks, what is wrong with the "mentally ill"? He tells the story of an upstanding civic and family member who went on a killing rampage murdering a number of his fellow workers. He was apparently holding some grudge. Did this man have a mental illness or was he merely being irresponsible? [Consider also that both explanations may be applicable. In law and in practice we do speak about diminished responsibility.] Adams concludes that mental illness does not exist unless caused by an organic source. He quotes a number of Bible texts that indicate the dangers of resentment et cetera.

For him, mental problems are autogenic problems; the mentally ill are people with unresolved personal problems. Symptoms are camouflage, diverting attention from deviant behaviour. Problems are chemically-based or morally-based. No other types of human functioning exist. There is, in most cases,
no mental illness. He gives a couple of examples of this principle for a student who was diagnosed with catatonic schizophrenic and for a manic depressive woman that he met with Mower in hospitals in Illinois. In the first case, the student was about to fail his college work in a massive way and in the other case the woman had committed adultery with the next-door neighbour. Although he concedes that there is a grey area between the organic and the moral he concludes that in most cases the category of mental illness is a misnomer.

However, to imagine that humans are merely organic and moral aspects bonded together is reductionistic. Furthermore, humans are aware that we operate within a mode of being with puts us ‘in touch’ with our surroundings, with others, with God’s presence. This ‘sensitivity’ function by which we sense and feel what is going on, and perhaps experience emotions of differing strengths and durations is what psychologists study. This function is distinguishable but not separate from our discriminative function.

Sometimes, our sensitive way of being in the world goes haywire. We become chronically afraid, depressed, guilty or angry. Temperamentally or through heredity, we may be disposed towards chronic experiences of these types of feelings.

Each of these may be connected to actions that are problematic such as drug taking of various types, gambling and other addictive behaviours, and relationship difficulties at home and work. At this point, some type of psychotherapy or psychoactive drugs or both may be required.

**Chapter IV: What is Biblical (Nouthetic) Counseling?**
This question is answered in chapter 4. Basic premises are that Jesus Christ is the centre of true Christian counselling. Second, we only know Jesus and his will through his Word in scripture. Third, scripture describes counselling

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11 Or rational function.
as nouthetic confrontation. For example, Col 3:16 "admonishing", Romans 15:14, Act 20:31. This activity is to undertaken by the whole church but it is peculiarly the work of the ordained\textsuperscript{12} ministry.

Nouthetic confrontation (NC) involves three elements:

1. NC always implies that something is wrong in the one being confronted. Therefore, a change is required of the person being confronted. Fundamental purpose of NC is to "effect personality and behavioral change" (p. 45).

2. solving of problems is through verbal means. And, why the emphasis on verbal means? Trench, a noted authority, is quoted to confirm that nouthesia is the training by word of mouth which involves the notion of admonishing with blame. NC aims to straighten out the person by changing behaviour to conform to biblical standards. Person is to confess and repent. Examples of NC are Nathan's confronting David, Jesus with Peter, God with Eli.

Adams is not particularly interested to delve back into counsellees' past but to rather ask, What have you been doing? (We will meet this question later in Reality therapy.\textsuperscript{13}) Emphasis is upon, what are you doing now? What can be done about this situation? What does God say must be done? Counselling is essentially a disciplinary and corrective process.

3. an underlying purpose or motive. Verbal correction is for the good of the counselee. NC is motivated by love not by any wish to punish the person, to help not to hurt (1 Cor 4:14; Eph 6:4; 2 Thess 3:15).

\textsuperscript{12} This belief is guided by Adams' clericalism. I assume that only the clergy are able to do counselling because, traditionally, before Freud, that is what they did.

\textsuperscript{13} A connection exists between Hobart Mowrer, and Adams and William Glasser.
Some extra aspects of NC: Confrontation must be scriptural confrontation as opposed to what counsellor believes. This direction he bases on 2 Tim 3:16; 4:2. [Note the word useful in that text.] Confrontation must embody deep involvement. Acts 20:38. St Paul nouthetically confronted "with tears". Adams comments that "probably there is no need to cry as Paul did. Modern American culture is different" (p. 52). [My criticism re this gloss is that Adams appears to wander from scripture when it suits him.]

Adams sums up view of counselling with the words:

Christian counseling involves the use of authoritative instruction. 'Authoritative instruction' requires the use of directive, nouthetic techniques. Technique, and all methodology, must grow out of and be appropriate to purpose and content. The end does not justify the means; rather, it regulates the means. Love will blossom as counselors focus their attention upon purification of the heart, the clearing of the conscience, and building of genuine trust. Counseling will seek to reverse those sinful patterns which began in the Garden of Eden (CC, p. 55).

Chapter V: The Pastor as Nouthetic Counselor
Adams takes up the question of dealing with unbelievers in a counselling context and states that 'any such counseling that claims to be Christian surely must be evangelistic' (p. 67).

This chapter shows how important it is to know what we mean when we speak about counselling. Many types of counselling exist. However, psychological counselling or psychotherapy is therapy directed towards the psyche or sensitivity dimension of humanness which we share, incidentally, with animals. The latter fact correlates well with the history of psychology which has studied animals extensively.
Furthermore, for Christians, Adams believes that counselling is part of the process of sanctification and being such cannot be offered to the unsaved in the same way as the saved.

Nevertheless, Adams position is nuanced. First, he does not begin an evangelistic spiel with an unsaved counsellee straightaway but may wait for some sessions before doing that, all the while stressing the Christian character of the counselling he is offering. Second, he believes that although the better works that an unsaved person may begin to do as a result of counselling cannot get her into the kingdom, to not do these things is to be in an even more sinful situation. He derives this understanding from chapter 16, section 7 of the Westminster Confession. Hence, to be a good father or mother is laudable even if the person is not a Christian. To not be such is to be in a position of greater rebellion before the Lord.

Chapter V1: Nouthetic & Rogerian Counseling
See later under group work heading

Chapter V11: Confess Your Sins
Adams cites Proverbs 28: 13 as summing up the gist of this chapter.

‘He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper: but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.’

Confession is God’s remedy for man’s problems according to Adams. Concealment brings ‘misery, defeat and ruin, but confession and forsaking of sin will bring merciful pardon and relief’ (p. 105).

Adams presents an in-depth study of James 5: 14-16. Doubtless James teaches the possibility that some sickness is related to the personal sin of the sick person. [Although the discussion of sin comes almost as an afterthought in the Biblical passage. ] (In the broader scheme of things, _____________)

14 This point appears to contradict what he has said earlier on my page 3.
Adams says, all sickness is indirectly the result of Adam and Eve’s sin. But, some sickness appears to be directly the result of the sin of the unwell person as in verse 16.) [In passing note that it is the faith of the leaders that is instrumental in making the sick well. Verse 15.]

Adams believes that the oil, olive oil, was a universal medicine at that time so that what the text is saying is that we should use the best medicines of our time with prayer (p. 108) AND confession if personal sin is involved. (You may not have heard this interpretation regarding this passage before but I certainly think it has merit.)

Note that Adams does accept that not all sickness is related to particular sins (p. 108). However, pastors should ‘as a regular practice . . . inquire into the possibility of sin as the root of the sickness’ (p. 109). Confession is to others, to the one wronged, to the elders (presbyters, priests), to God. Adams recommends role-play to assist person to do her confession (based on the prodigal son’s rehearsal of his confession to his father!).

When person goes to make his confession, it is important that he allows no minimising by the wronged person of what has been done. To be content with, ‘Forget it. I don’t care about it’ is to minimise sin (which should never be done because it is violation of God’s holy standards) and may be a way the other person seeks to avoid making a definite act of forgiveness. Often the sinner needs help to assist them in breaking a particular behaviour pattern that has become ingrained. The wronged person may be able to help him with that.

Finally, psychosomatic illness is not directly spoken of in James 5 or in 1 Cor 11: 27-30 where some in the church were criticised for sinning ‘against his body and blood’. This sin has led to the situation where ‘many of you are sick and weak and [is the reason for] why a lot of others have died’ (verse
However, Adams refers to Psalm 32, 38, and 51. He has a number of things to say about depression which he claims follow from guilt.\(^{15}\)

**The Evils of Freud and Rogers**

Adams adduces a number of critical statements regarding Freudian-based psychiatry. One person quoted is Hans Eysenck, a behaviourist, who you remember concluded from a study in 1952 that patients who were psychoanalysed were no better off than those who had received no treatment. Another strong anti-Freudian was Thomas Szasz, Professor of Psychiatry at the State University of New York, who wrote a well-known book called *The Myth of Mental Illness*. However, Szasz was against all types of counselling!

**The Freudian Ethic**

Adams’ charge re this ethic is that to label mental problems as sickness is to remove from them any semblance of human responsibility. When troubled people do wrong, they are not held accountable. They claim their problems are caused by others (allogenic) rather than self-caused (autogenic). Society is blamed for an individual’s actions. Psychoanalysis is a search to find who in the patient’s history is to be blamed for her present problems.

**Freudian Therapy and Theory**

Fundamentals of the Freudian theory are that humans have internal conflicts. On the one hand, the Id, the basic drives and instincts of sex and aggression seek wholesale expression. On the other hand, the Superego (conscience and ego ideal), developed by the teachings of parents, church, teachers et cetera, holds the Id in check. Mental problems arise when this Superego is over socialised to be overly strict and severe. The Ego is the arbiter between the two. Guilt feelings arise if the overly strict Superego prevents the Id forces from being expressed. However, these feelings are false guilt.

\(^{15}\) A point about which Adams agrees with Freud! However, Freud hypothesised that guilt was not always reality-based.
According to Adams, the therapist stands with the Id against the Superego hoping to weaken the latter’s demands. ‘Ventilation . . . is part of the process. Resocialization according to reasonable and realistic standards is the other crucial part’ (p. 11). Adams argues that if the above were true the most immoral and amoral people would be the happiest and such is not the case.

**Rogerian Counselling**

A major difference between NC and Rogerian counselling, apart from the issue of human autonomy versus divine autonomy, according to Adams, is that nouthetic counselling believes **behaviour is more important than feeling**, while for Rogers, feeling is more important than behaviour and cognition. In Rogerian counselling, we are ever listening to the counsellee’s presentation and trying to sense the emotional undercurrent of his words.

Adams regards this as wrong-headed. He cites Cain’s experience of feeling bad in Genesis 4 following his bad behaviour. Furthermore, God says to Cain, ‘If you do right, will not your face be lifted up?’ That is, good behaviour will lead to good feelings. We don’t have emotional problems. Our emotions are working very well. We ‘feel bad because of bad behaviour; feelings flow from actions’ (p. 93). Bad feelings tell us like a red flashing light on a car’s dashboard that something is wrong.

**Revolution in Psychology**

Glasser and Mowrer have begun to challenge the dominance of Freudian and Rogerian irresponsibility. These writers are advocating what amounts to a moral model of counselling. One is beset by guilt because one has broken real standards of moral conduct (not unreal ones). We don’t have emotional problems, we have behavioural problems. We have not acted in the right way.
GROUP WORK: Freud & Rogers

**DISCUSS** Adams’ criticism of Freudian psychotherapy as being irresponsible. Is this a fair criticism? Does Freudian counselling simply ally itself with the Id against the Superego?

**DISCUSS** Adams’ main criticism of Rogers that feeling is more important than behaviour? Do we always feel bad because of sinful behaviour? What about grief and loss? Are feeling and behaviour both important?

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