

Reformational Counseling

The Reformation occurred during a time of spiritual renewal within the Christian church, and many of its defining themes are extremely relevant for distinctly Christian counselling. We will focus on a number of these themes, drawing out their therapeutic relevance, and consider how we might make use of them in counselling with Christians.

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I. Introduction

II. Features of the Reformation Relevant to Counseling

A. God is Above All in the Universe and His Glory is the Highest Human Motive

B. The Bible Provides Our Spectacles and Sets the Soul-Care Agenda

C. God is Sovereign Over All Things

1. All things work together for good

2. Election

D. Sin is the Worst Kind of Psychopathology

The impact of sin was emphasized in the Reformation.

Initial recognition that religion was corrupt (but this was not internalized until Kierkegaard)

1. Humans are fallen: born with “indwelling sin” (disposition to resist God) and shameful
2. Entire soul is corrupt
3. Sins are a sign of sin and create guilt
4. Other psychopathology flows directly and indirectly from human fallenness

E. The Relation Between Knowledge of God and Self

F. Covenantal Care of the Soul (actually a post-reformation theme)

1. All humans are in covenantal relation with God
2. Christians are members of the New Covenant
 - a. God is committed to us for eternity
 - b. God is training us to be similarly committed to him

G. Christ’ Redemption is the Primary Soul-Curing Dynamic

His life, death, and resurrection are to be the constant focus of attention

H. Justification (Declarative Salvation is the Foundation of Soul-Care Change)

Declarative salvation refers to all the blessings that God bestows on a believer the moment they trust Christ (e.g., union with Christ, justification by faith, adoption, sainthood, belovedness)

I. Sanctification is a Gradual Process

J. Priesthood of the Believer

Renewed emphasis placed on individual faith, responsibility, and effort in the Christian life, resting on the grace of God.

Unfortunately, this emphasis was taken too far in Western individualism

K. Reformata Semper Reformanda

II. Weaknesses in the Reformation

A. Emphasis on the fear of God, more than the love of God

B. Divisiveness became a cardinal virtue

III. The Nature of Psychological Reformation

A. The Form = Christ

B. Formation

Creational human development

C. Abnormal human development

1. Deformation

Damage to the developing soul due to

- a) Calamity
- b) Biological insult
- c) Abuse/Oppression

2. Malformation

Damage to the developing soul due to personal sin.

Formation in this fallen life includes deformation and malformation.
Once born people only experience formation (and abnormal dev.)

D. Reformation

Healing of the soul due to Christ's redemption
Only twice-born people experience reformation.