

The Dangerous Theology of the Enneagram

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The Enneagram has been widely promoted as an ancient personality typing tool, and its claim to contain “spiritual wisdom” has contributed to its increasing popularity in churches.² But a careful evaluation of its history reveals that while the Enneagram symbol itself has a somewhat mysterious origin, the symbol’s personality typing was developed and applied by secular psychiatrists in the 1970s.³ Once those personality typologies, known as Ennea-types, were assigned to the Enneagram symbol and taught by a Gestalt psychiatrist, American Jesuits further propagated the use of the Enneagram and endorsed its spiritualization that continues today.⁴ An examination of the Enneagram works of Catholic priest Richard Rohr and Jesuit teacher Don Riso revealed their theological influence on current Enneagram writers who are popular among evangelicals.⁵ But a biblical critique of

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² Katherine Burgess, “The Enneagram Is Taking Off Among Christians: It’s a Tool That Maps Out People’s Nine Personality Types,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, TN, February 16, 2020, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/life/2020/02/04/why-enneagram-type-test-popular-with-christians/4600988002/>; Christopher L. Heuertz, *The Sacred Enneagram: Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017); Don Richard Riso, and Russ Hudson, *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality Types* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 19.

³ Carolyn Bartlett, “Viewing Therapy Through a New Lens,” *Annals Of The American Psychotherapy Association* 11, no. 1 (2008): 34; Claudio Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures: Self-Analysis for the Seeker* (Nevada City, CA: Gateways Publishers, 1990), xix.

⁴ Don Richard Riso, *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 17-18; Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, xix; Jonathan Merritt, “What is the ‘Enneagram,’ and why are Christians suddenly so Enamored by it?” <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>, Sept. 5, 2017 (Accessed September 18, 2018).

⁵ Ian Morgan Cron, and Suzanne Stabile, *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016), 19; Heuertz, 9-11; Suzanne Stabile, *The Path in Between Us: An*

the seminal Enneagram works of Rohr and Riso revealed a low view of Scripture, inaccurate doctrine of man and sin, and neglect of the Holy Spirit's role in the Enneagram's process of biblical change. The theology demonstrated in the influential works of Enneagram authors Rohr and Riso is contrary to orthodox evangelical theology. Therefore, the Enneagram should be rejected by evangelical Christians for use in biblical counseling and other ministries.

First, a brief explanation of the Enneagram symbol and an overview of its conflicted historical origin will be provided. Next, the development history of the Enneagram personality typology, its various forms, and how it “works” will be summarized. Third, the Enneagram typology's use in secular psychology and psychiatry, as well as in Christian ministry will be surveyed. Then the theology of two influential Jesuit authors who promoted and taught the use of the Enneagram will be critiqued. In this article, the explanations of the Enneagram types, methodologies, and meanings are not intended to be exhaustive. But sufficient background information on the Enneagram is provided to position a brief theological evaluation of the influential writing of Enneagram authors Rohr and Riso.

The Enneagram Symbol and Personality Typology

The Enneagram *symbol* is distinct from the personality typology *labels* that have been added to the symbol in the last fifty years.⁶ The symbol itself was introduced to the western world in the early 1900s.⁷ Nine personality types were developed by secular psychologists and placed onto the symbol in the early 1970s.⁸ Then Catholics began using the symbol and its assigned personality types in their spiritual formation efforts, and two main Jesuit authors emerged to write on the Enneagram's use in churches and religious institutions. The personality typology was further developed into a detailed test to determine not only one's

Enneagram Journey to Healthy Relationships (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 186; Alice Fryling, *Mirror for the Soul: A Christian Guide to the Enneagram* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017). In *Road*, Cron and Stabile list Rohr first among their teachers in “Acknowledgements,” 233; Rohr wrote the foreword for Heuertz's *Sacred*, and Heuertz included Rohr among those to whom he dedicated *Sacred*, 9-11; Stabile dedicated *Path* to her husband, children, grandchildren, and Rohr; and Rohr wrote a back-cover endorsement for Fryling's *Mirror*. Cron, Stabile, Heuertz, and Fryling each refer to Rohr extensively in their works.

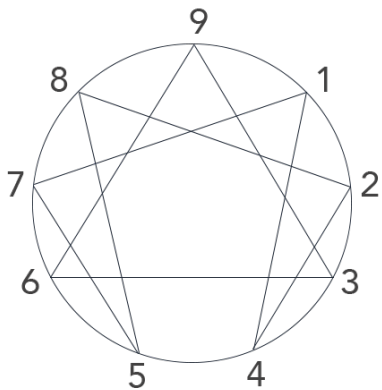
6 Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 19-20; Riso, *Personality*, 11-22; Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, xix; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 8-9.

7 Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 20; Riso, *Personality*, 19.

8 Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 20; Riso, *Personality*, 19; Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, xix.

personality type but also the motivations of each personality that leads to freedom from the associated passions and sins of each type.⁹

The Enneagram Symbol and Its Contested Origin



The term Enneagram comes from a combination of the Greek words *εννεα* meaning “nine” and *γραμμα* meaning “that which is written or drawn.”¹⁰ The Enneagram symbol, pictured below, consists of a circle with nine points located equidistant from each other on the circumference with the numeral 9 positioned at the highest point on the circle’s circumference. The other eight numerals, beginning with 1, are located sequentially clockwise from the 9. The inside of the circle consists of an equilateral triangle formed by internally connecting points 9, 3, and 6. The remaining six circumferential points are connected internally in the order determined by the mathematical quotient of the number 1 divided by 7, which is the series of numerals 1, 4, 2, 8, 5, and 7 in that distinct infinite order. Interestingly, any cardinal number divided by the number seven yields a quotient with a remainder consisting of those same six numbers in the same ongoing infinite sequence.” Explaining the *origin* of the Enneagram symbol, however, is not so exact or precise.

There is no general agreement on the source or date of origin of the Enneagram symbol, but possible dates of origin range from Babylonian times to as late as the sixteenth century.¹² Alice Fryling, a popular author on Christian application of the Enneagram, claimed that “We know that the Christian roots of the Enneagram probably go back to the desert mothers and fathers of the fourth century. They are often considered the “spiritual directors” or mentors of the early church. As people sought them out for help on the spiritual journey,

⁹ Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 19-20; Riso, *Personality*, 17.

¹⁰ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 5th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1956), 120.

¹¹ For example, 1 divided by 7 = 0.1428572142857142857.... The series of six numerals 142857 continues infinitely. This infinitely repeating sequence of numbers, referred to as a “repetend,” can be designated mathematically as 0.(142857). Similarly, 2 divided by 7 = 0.(285714), 3 divided by 7 = 0.(428571), and so on.

¹² Heuertz, 42-44; Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 19-20; Rohr, *Discovering*, 5.

these teachers saw patterns of life that are reflected in the Enneagram.”¹³ Despite Fryling’s assertion, most current experts credit the Sufi Muslims of Central Asia with developing the Enneagram symbol between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁴ Regardless of its origin, there is little dispute that the Enneagram *symbol* was introduced in the early 1900s to the Western world by George I. Gurdjieff, who became familiar with it while in Afghanistan.¹⁵ Gurdjieff used the Enneagram to teach his students mysterious “esoteric subjects,” which apparently did not include any psychological or personality typology.¹⁶ Instead, Gurdjieff developed a more universal understanding of the Enneagram and believed that it could be used “as an overlay to explain any evolved system, be it religion, science, or astrology.”¹⁷ Gurdjieff believed that “Everything can be included and read in the Enneagram.”¹⁸

Modern Psychological Typology Was Overlaid On the Enneagram Symbol

During the 1950’s and 1960’s, a Bolivian named Oscar Ichazo developed an application of the Enneagram symbol in relation to human personality and claimed to have learned it from Afghani Sufi masters *before* he came upon Gurdjieff’s writings.¹⁹ Ichazo’s work with the Enneagram symbol was included in a larger body of work on the human being as a whole, a teaching that he called “protoanalysis.”²⁰ His teaching was a mixture of methods aimed at achieving higher levels of consciousness and “full enlightenment” that included studying

¹³ Alice Fryling, *Mirror for the Soul: A Christian Guide to the Enneagram* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 8.

¹⁴ Jerome P. Wagner, and Ronald E. Walker. "Reliability and Validity Study of a Sufi Personality Typology: The Enneagram." *Journal Of Clinical Psychology* 39, no. 5 (1983): 712; Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert, *Discovering the Enneagram: An Ancient Tool for a New Spiritual Journey* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2018), 5-7; Heuertz, 44.

¹⁵ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 8; Heuertz, 47.

¹⁶ Cron and Stabile, 10; Albert Ellis, Lidia D. Abrams, and Mike Abrams, *Personality Theories: Critical Perspectives* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2009), 571; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 8-9; Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 20.

¹⁷ Heuertz, 45.

¹⁸ P.D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: The Teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff* (New York: Harvest Book, 2001), 294.

¹⁹ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 9.

²⁰ Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, 1-3; 156.

physical organs and systems of the human body, astrological signs, and mantras. Eventually, Ichazo characterized his nine psychological types as “ego fixations” in an effort to bring his labels more into agreement with the modern psychology of his day (see Appendix A).²¹

Claudio Naranjo, a Fulbright scholar and Gestalt psychiatrist, studied “protoanalysis” with Ichazo and brought it to the United States in the early 1970s.²² He wanted to utilize the term “protoanalysis” to describe his own work and teaching on personality typology, but because Ichazo had trademarked the term, Naranjo instead coined the term “Ennea-types.” In the 1960s, Naranjo worked with Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy, which is “an experiential therapy stressing awareness and integration [which] grew as a reaction against analytic therapy.”²³ Naranjo eventually combined Perls’s psychiatry with Ichazo’s “protoanalysis” and overlaid the nine Ennea-types onto the Enneagram symbol. Ichazo’s “protoanalysis” and Naranjo’s “Ennea-types” have combined with Perls’s Gestalt psychiatry to form the foundation for most modern Enneagram psychological profiling systems and tests.²⁴ These personality type designations on the Enneagram symbol, at least as starting points, are now treated as the *de facto* nine types.²⁵

Modern Efforts to Christianize the Enneagram

Claudio Naranjo began teaching the Ennea-types at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California in the early 1970s.²⁶ Among his students were several American Jesuit priests, including Reverend Robert Ochs, who began adapting his own hand-written notes on the Ennea-types to Catholic spiritual formation and counseling needs for seminarians and laypeople. Although Ochs never published his notes on the Ennea-types, he was instrumental in teaching this personality typology at Jesuit theological centers, at Loyola

²¹ Ellis, 571-72; Riso, *Personality*, 16; Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 22-24.

²² Naranjo, *Ennea-Type Structures*, xix.

²³ Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 8th ed. (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2009), 9; 198-227.

²⁴ Don Richard Riso, *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 17; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 9; Heuertz 47-48.

²⁵ Riso, 17; Riso and Hudson, 24.

²⁶ Ellis, 572; Riso, *Personality*, 17; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 9. The Esalen Institute is a non-profit founded in 1962. “Esalen is a major catalyst in the transformation of humankind, working with individuals and institutions to integrate body, mind, heart, spirit, and community in a nurturing relationship with the environment.” <https://www.esalen.org/page/our-mission-values>.

University in Chicago, and at the University of California at Berkeley.²⁷ By 1974, Enneagram materials used at Jesuit retreats were developed into one-page sketches of the nine different Enneagram personality types. And those pages became the foundational ideas of a Jesuit seminarian, Don Riso, and a Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr. Riso would go on to write the formative work *Personality Types* in 1987 and Rohr would write *Discovering the Enneagram* in 1989.²⁸ Both men and their works are considered seminal in the development of Enneagram books, seminars, and personality tests.²⁹ By the mid-1980s, numerous books had been written on the Enneagram from both a religious and psychological perspective.³⁰ Riso and Hudson worked to develop an Enneagram type questionnaire that would eventually become the Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI), which consists of 144 paired statements and requires about 40 minutes to complete.³¹

How the Enneagram is Used in Therapy and Counseling

Secular psychologists and therapists utilize the Enneagram as a tool to establish a reference point from which to move clients toward some type of conflict resolution. Most counselors who employ the Enneagram do so in Gestalt therapy fashion by emphasizing the client's self-awareness and motivation.³² The Enneagram has been largely discredited by the scientific community, and although the need for more empirical evidence of its usefulness has been acknowledged, none has been produced that is acceptable in the academic world.³³

²⁷ Heuertz, 48; Riso, *Personality*, 17; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 9.

²⁸ Riso, *Personality*, 16-17; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering the Enneagram* was first published as *Das Enneagramm: Die 9 Gesichter der Seele* in 1989 and translated into English in 1990.

²⁹ Cron, Stabile, Heuertz, and Fryling acknowledge Rohr, Riso, or both in their works on the Enneagram.

³⁰ See J. G. Bennett, *Enneagram Studies*, (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1983); Barbara Metz, and John Burchill, *The Enneagram and Prayer: Discovering Our True Selves Before God* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1987); Don Richard Riso, *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

³¹ The RHETI version 2.5 can be accessed online at <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/rheti/>

³² Thelma Duffey, and Shane Haberstroh, "Developmental Relational Counseling: Applications for Counseling Men," *Journal Of Counseling & Development* 92, no. 1 (2014): 108; Howard Winokuer, and Darcy Harris, *Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2012), 165.

³³ Gerald P. Koocher, Madeline R. McMann, Annika O. Stout, and John C. Norcross, "Discredited Assessment and Treatment Methods Used with Children and Adolescents: A Delphi Poll," *Journal of Clinical*

People are generally trained in the use of the Enneagram by reading books, attending seminars, watching videos, or taking some typology test based on the Ennea-types. The complexity of the tool itself makes it appealing to some, but most Enneagram authors admit to the common trap of people getting stuck on their number or label and never moving beyond it.³⁴

Determining a Person's Number, Wings, and Direction

The first step in utilizing the Enneagram typology is to determine a person's basic type, or their "number." According to Riso, every person emerges from childhood as one of nine main personality types that are numbered, labeled in a single word, and described further in three or four basic single-word character descriptors (Appendix A, columns 1 and 2).³⁵ Methods for determining what number a person is can be as simple as reading the nine type names and associated descriptors and then choosing the label that best fits one's self-perception. Or one can choose from the plethora of available online tests ranging in length from 2 questions to 144 questions.³⁶ Regardless of the method a person uses to identify his *basic* personality type, he must then take notice and become familiar with the two adjacent types, called "wings." For example, a number 5 must also understand the characteristics of its neighboring types 4 and 6. This is important, because each person must be aware that he is a unique mixture of his basic type and *at least* one, if not both, of his wings.³⁷

Once a person determines his basic number and wing(s), what he does with this information depends on the Enneagram author or teaching to which he subscribes. Riso

Child & Adolescent Psychology 44 (5) (2015): 725; Rebecca A. Newgent, Patricia E. Parr, Isadore Newman, and Kristin K. Higgins, "The Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator: Estimates of Reliability and Validity," *Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development* 36 (4) (2004): 235; R. Elliott Ingersoll, and David M. Zeidler. *Integral Psychotherapy: Inside Out/Outside In*, SUNY Series in Integral Theory (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 174-175; Ellis, 575.

³⁴ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 14; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 24. Rohr and Ebert are quick to point out the dangers of being pigeon-holed, but point to a need to "go deeper."

³⁵ Ellis, 574; Riso, *Personality*, 28.

³⁶ There are several online Enneagram tests available, some of which are free. The Riso-Hudson QUEST™ is a two-question test and is included in the book *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*; the RHETI™ is a 144-question test, currently priced at \$12, and available online at <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com>

³⁷ Riso, *Personality*, 15; Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 69-70; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 29-30; Cron and Stabile, 58. Rohr and Ebert maintain that both wings can complement a person's basic type, while Riso and Hudson hold that only one wing can. Heuertz remains neutral.

maintained that every person is moving towards another personality type as either psychological integration (health, self-actualization) or psychological deterioration (unhealthy, neurosis) takes place. The direction of integration is 9-3-6-9 for the Enneagram types located on the triangle points, and 1-7-5-8-2-4-1 for types located on the hexagram points. The direction for disintegration is reversed for both triangle points or hexagram points.³⁸ Some teachers and authors choose to use only personality type numbers while others assign short labels to each number. Still others assign “needs” to each personality type in an effort to help clients better understand themselves and those around them.³⁹

The Enneagram’s Use in Secular Therapy

The Enneagram is commonly used in secular psychology and therapy as a tool to facilitate the client’s development of self-awareness and other-awareness with the common goal of resolving some type of internal or external conflict.⁴⁰ In an effort to assist their clients in making cognitive and behavioral changes, counselors and therapists use the Enneagram to help patients develop a deeper understanding of their own personality type and those of others, with the goal of productive relational change.⁴¹ Because the dynamics of interpersonal conflicts include the personalities of all people involved, the Enneagram can help people constructively manage their own thinking and behavior, as well as understand how others perceive them when a misunderstanding occurs.⁴² Dr. Thelma Duffey, Professor of Counseling and Department Chair at the University of Texas at San Antonio stated about the Enneagram, that “It can help individuals increase their level of self-awareness and their understanding of others by discovering the motivations behind their behaviors.”⁴³ Karen Tapp, Associate Professor of Counseling, Social Work, and Leadership at Northern Kentucky

38 Riso, 35-37; The Enneagram Institute®, founded by Riso and Hudson in 1997, offers more detailed explanations of these processes at <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/how-the-enneagram-system-works/>

39 Heuertz, 35.

40 Erin Kern Popejoy, Kristi Perryman, and Anthony Suarez. "Using the Enneagram to Facilitate Resolution of Supervisory Conflict." *Journal Of Counselor Practice* 8, no. 2 (2017): 136.

41 Karen Tapp, and Ken Engebretson, "Using the Enneagram for Client Insight and Transformation: A Type Eight Illustration," *Journal Of Creativity In Mental Health* 5, no. 1 (2010): 65.

42 Tapp, 67.

43 Duffey, 108.

University, summarized her thoughts on what secular therapy can accomplish with the Enneagram tool:

Using the Enneagram during the therapeutic process can help mental health practitioners facilitate client insight and self-discovery. The system can help those in therapy use the Enneagram as a tool to gain insight into their personality. It provides clients and counselors a common language with which to discuss problems. More specifically, using the Enneagram can instruct clients on identifying how their own behavior and perceptions cause barriers to effective relationships and personal productivity. The system can be used to devise strategies to work more effectively with others and teach others to discern personality styles different from their own. For those seeking productive relational change, the Enneagram provides a source of insight and a tool for transformation.⁴⁴

Advocates argue that a wide range of possible Enneagram applications exist. Winouker claimed success with the Enneagram in the arena of grief counseling, using it as a tool to help guide clients in a way of grieving that is appropriate to their specific personality type.⁴⁵ Still another use in therapy is predictive in nature. In *Integral Recovery: A Revolutionary Approach to the Treatment of Alcoholism and Addiction*, John Dupuy claimed that in drug addiction recovery treatment, a patient's Enneagram type will influence how and why they began to use drugs, as well as which actual type of drug the patient is most likely to abuse.⁴⁶ Similarly, Jennifer Schneider, M.D., PhD, completed a study of sex addicts and claimed that certain Enneagram personality types are more prone to sexual addiction. This study also tracked addicts through recovery and claimed to accurately predict which types do better in recovery.⁴⁷

Since its introduction in the United States, the Enneagram's most consistent application has been in the area of organizational development as a tool for building effective teams and work environments. Richard Knowles developed the Process Enneagram[®] as a tool

⁴⁴ Tapp, 71.

⁴⁵ Winouker, 89-90.

⁴⁶ John Dupuy, *Integral Recovery: A Revolutionary Approach to the Treatment of Alcoholism and Addiction*, Excelsior Editions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 74. Dupuy concedes that more research is needed on making a definite connection between determining a client's personality type and choice of different types of drugs.

⁴⁷ Jennifer Schneider, and Brenda Schaeffer, "The Enneagram Typology: A Tool for Understanding and Counseling Sex Addicts," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 4 (3) (1997): 245-278.

to help organizations form effective teams for solving complex problems.⁴⁸ Stanford University School of Business, the U.S. Postal Service, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency have used the Enneagram among other applications as part of their management training, and there is ongoing research into its application in the arena of primary and secondary education. The research specifically targets increasing the effectiveness of teaching as a result of better teacher-student relationships.⁴⁹ The benefit in most Enneagram applications is relational improvement from participants' increased awareness of their own personality types and those of others.

In the academic arena, the Enneagram remains noticeably absent from the indexes and tables of contents of most psychotherapy or personality theory textbooks.⁵⁰ While author Albert Ellis did include the Enneagram in his textbook *Personality Theories: Critical Perspectives*, he grouped it with "Religious, New Age, and Traditional Approaches to Personality." Ellis proposed a correlation of Enneagram Types to DSM disorders along with Freudian and Jungian typologies (see Appendix A).⁵¹ Elliott Ingersoll, Chair and Professor of Counseling at Cleveland State University, stated that only two peer-reviewed journals have published studies on the Enneagram's reliability and validity.⁵² Those studies do not support use of the nine personality types, but note that the Enneagram "can be useful if the client is enthusiastic about it."⁵³ Most notably, in a recent study of thirty-six different mental health assessment tests utilized in child and adolescent psychiatry, the Enneagram tied for last place among all the tests that were evaluated.⁵⁴ The Enneagram was *the most* discredited of all the

⁴⁸ Richard N. Knowles, "Editorial: The Process Enneagram," *Emergence: Complexity & Organization* 15, no. 1 (2013): vii-viii; Catherine Taylor, "The Process Enneagram: A Practitioner's Guide to Its Use as a Facilitative Tool in the Corporate Environment," *Emergence: Complexity & Organization* 15, no. 1 (2013): 55.

⁴⁹ Andrew M. Bland, "The Enneagram: A Review of the Empirical and Transformational Literature," *Journal Of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development* 49, no. 1 (2010): 26-27.

⁵⁰ Bernardo J. Carducci, *The Psychology of Personality*, 2nd ed., (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009); Barbara Engler, *Personality Theories: An Introduction*, 8th ed., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009); Albert Ellis, *Personality Theories: Critical Perspectives*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009). Jess Feist, and Gregory J. Feist, *Theories of Personality* (Boston : McGraw-Hill, 2002).

⁵¹ Ellis, 529-576.

⁵² Ingersoll and Zeitler, 174.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Gerald P. Koocher, Madeline R. McMann, Annika O. Stout, and John C. Norcross, "Discredited Assessment and Treatment Methods Used with Children and Adolescents: A Delphi Poll." *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology* 44 (5) (2015): 725.

psychological assessments tests that were evaluated.⁵⁵ Academics generally agree that more empirical analysis needs to be done to validate the use of Enneagram personality typologies as a legitimate tool.⁵⁶

Enneagram Acceptance and Rejection in Evangelical Churches

Evangelical pastors and writers are mixed on their views of whether or not to endorse and utilize the Enneagram in general or in specific ministries, including counseling. Several representative writers from widely read and influential sources are cited herein as indicative of current thinking in the evangelical community.

Author John Starke, a frequent contributor to *The Gospel Coalition*, wrote on the Enneagram in *Christianity Today* that

As a pastor in a confessional and evangelical tradition, I want the people I counsel and lead to trust in the sufficiency of Scripture, the power of the gospel, the regular graces of gathered worship, the preaching of God's Word, and the Lord's Supper for spiritual growth. Leaders who share my convictions have been suspicious of using tools like the Enneagram. Even still, I believe the Enneagram can enhance, not replace, our participation in the normal means of Christian grace and growth.⁵⁷

Like many other evangelical pastors, Starke confesses and teaches a doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, but he chooses to functionally endorse other extra-biblical means. However, endorsing and employing the Enneagram in ministry is different from referring to a lexicon, concordance, or commentary to better understand a difficult or obscure Bible passage. Starke went further in advocating the typology: "The Enneagram exposes to us where we need to come to Christ and seek transformation. In Christ, by the power of participation in his Spirit, we can experience healing of our fear, guilt, or shame. But also, in Christ is the power to imitate his virtues."⁵⁸ Starke implied that the Enneagram enlightens Christians in areas where the Word cannot shine adequate light.

Joe Carter, a regular contributor to *The Gospel Coalition*, considered whether the Enneagram's origin itself should rule out evangelical use, and wrote inconclusively that

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Newgent, Parr, Newman, and Higgins, 235; Ellis, 575; Ingersoll and Zeitler, 174-175.

⁵⁷ John Starke, "An Evangelical's Guide to the Enneagram," *Christianity Today* 60, no. 9 (2016): 56.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 59.

Still, it raises the questions of whether we should be concerned because of the Enneagram's occultist origins. We definitely should be concerned when the Enneagram is being used, as many Catholics have, as a form of Gnostic-based numerology. We shouldn't be seeking divination from a tool that was developed by someone who claims it was handed to him in a vision from what sounds suspiciously like a demon. When the Enneagram is used simply as a diagnostic tool or for personality classification, the question becomes less clear. Despite its origin story, there may be enough of the Enneagram that remains useful (or at least non-harmful). If that's the case, we should leave the issue up to the conscience of the individual Christian.⁵⁹

Carter's neutral position left readers wondering, "Exactly *which* part(s) of the Enneagram are useful?" Or, to borrow Carter's own term, which parts of the Enneagram are "non-harmful" for Christians? Kevin DeYoung, in a blog critique of *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey of Self-Discovery* by Ian Cron and Suzanne Stabile, made clear his position about the dangers of using the Enneagram:

[M]ost importantly, the Enneagram presents an approach to spirituality that is alien to, and often at odds with, the language and contours of Scripture. Although Cron and Stabile argue that the Enneagram does not smuggle in the therapeutic under the guise of the theological (24), the book is awash in therapeutic language. Every chapter talks about some combination of forgiving myself, finding my true self, becoming spiritually evolved, being healed from wounded messages, dealing with codependent behaviors, and pursuing personal wholeness. This is not the language of the Bible. We hear nothing about fear of man, the love of the praise of man, covenantal promises, covenantal threats, repentance, atonement, heaven or hell. When faith is mentioned it's described as believing in something or someone bigger than you.⁶⁰

DeYoung contrasted the therapeutic language and process of change advanced by these Enneagram authors with the biblical language and process of sanctification. He pointed out specifically that "*The Road Back to You* has no doctrine of conversion, because

⁵⁹ Joe Carter, "The FAQs: What Christians Should Know About the Enneagram." *The Gospel Coalition*, August 8, 2018. Accessed October 17, 2018. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faqs-what-christians-should-know-about-the-enneagram/>.

⁶⁰ Kevin DeYoung, "Enneagram: The Road Back to You, Or to Somewhere Else?" *The Gospel Coalition: Kevin DeYoung Blog*, February 1, 2018. Accessed October 17, 2018. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/enneagram-road-back-somewhere-else/>

the human condition described has no need of regeneration.”⁶¹ DeYoung concluded his critique of Cron and Stabile by pointing out the danger of the Enneagram’s claim to “spiritual significance” – a claim that most other competing personality typologies do not make.⁶² This Enneagram claim of spiritual significance has contributed to this personality typology gaining popularity in evangelical churches and institutions.⁶³

Finally, John Houston, co-founder of the C. S. Lewis Institute and long-time Oxford Professor, crystallized the dilemma that many Christians face in deciding whether or not it is appropriate for them to use the Enneagram:

The apostles of the early church had strong views about the dangers of false teachers in their churches, as given in stern warnings in their epistles (1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1). Can evangelicals today, well meaning in their desire for more “spirituality,” become so naively eclectic in issues of the pursuit of contemporary spirituality? Since only truth stands the test of time, these syncretistic adoptions – such as the use of Jungian personality types or the application of the Enneagram – can divert undiscerning Christians with “tools” and “techniques,” instead of having a deeper biblical faith.⁶⁴

A brief survey of both Rohr’s theology and Riso’s theology – specifically their doctrines of God, man, Scripture, and sin – is a helpful starting point for evangelical Christians who are confused about the appropriateness of using the Enneagram in the church.

A Biblical Critique of Enneagram Personality Typology

Robert Ochs was the original Jesuit student of Naranjo’s Ennea-type teachings, and although he was a published writer, Ochs never published the Enneagram-related materials that he taught to others. Therefore, the seminal works of Richard Rohr and Don Riso, two of Ochs’ students, are referenced as primary representations of spiritual teaching that has

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Burgess, 19; Jonathan Merritt, “What is the ‘Enneagram,’ and why are Christians suddenly so Enamored by it?” <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>, Sept. 5, 2017 (Accessed September 18, 2018).

⁶⁴ James M. Houston, “The Future of Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 4 (2) (2011): 134.

influenced current Enneagram authors who are popular among evangelicals.⁶⁵ Rohr freely used Bible words like God, sin, repentance, and spirit throughout his Enneagram works, but scriptural references were used mainly to proof text various points that the author advanced.⁶⁶ Riso focused on a more general application of the Enneagram personality concepts. Riso promoted a type of spiritual wisdom associated with the Enneagram, and he eventually developed an Enneagram personality typology test. A brief theological consideration of Rohr's and Riso's doctrines of God, man, Scripture, and sin will be undertaken in light of the Enneagram's questionable history and vague spirituality.

Rohr's and Riso's Theology

Richard Rohr acknowledged in both his early Enneagram works that many Christians speak frequently about God, and also in the name of God, but are in fact living deceived lives as they pursue their own passions. He taught that, based on the foundational teachings of Jesuit founder Ignatius Loyola, the Enneagram can be used to help people in the “discernment of spirits” that effectively trap one’s soul.⁶⁷ But Rohr made no mention of the Holy Spirit’s role in this discernment of spirits. Instead, he proposed that the Enneagram itself can expose these “inner and outer voices and impulses that continually influence us.”⁶⁸ Rohr downplayed the holiness of God and man’s need to fear God, claiming that Protestantism “has seen to it that people are afraid of God, instead of falling in love with God.”⁶⁹ For example, Rohr cited psychotherapist Tilman Moser’s claim that the Protestant faith of his own childhood robbed him of his ability to feel right, become reconciled to himself, or find himself okay.⁷⁰ It is clear from reading Rohr that he advocated using the Enneagram to help man realize that, in spite of the passions or “sins” associated with each personality type, man is basically good. In his description of “gifted sinners,” Rohr

⁶⁵ See Rohr, Riso, Cron, Stabile, Fryling, and Heuertz.

⁶⁶ For example, Rohr referred to the Enneagram as a tool for “discernment of spirits” and cited 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world,” and 1 Thessalonians 5:21, “but test everything; hold fast what is good” for scriptural support. Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, xii; xvi; xix; xxii. All scriptural quotes herein are from the English Standard Version.

⁶⁷ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 11; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 21-22.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 121; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 136-137.

⁷⁰ Tilmann Moser, *Gottesvergiftung* (Frankfurt, 1976), 15-38.

acknowledged man's "inner voice" that exposes both the negative and positive in man as it confirms to us that "You really love God and long for God. You are good. Stop butchering yourself so brutally. You are a daughter or son of God. You can feel compassion."⁷¹

Don Riso did not clearly state his concept of God in his first published work on the Enneagram. But his later work demonstrated the pantheistic underpinnings of his endorsed Enneagram system through his effort to clarify the difference between personality and "Essence," which he also called "Spirit."⁷² He stated that "In spiritual language we could say that within each person is an individual spark of the Divine."⁷³ Riso contended that the Enneagram is simply a tool to help man experience his Essence, which is dominated by his personality. According to Riso, when a person successfully acknowledges his personality type and moves in the healthy direction of integration, he frees himself from the detrimental effects of his personality.⁷⁴ Only then can man experience his Essence. Riso stated that when this awareness of personality and subsequent liberation occurs, "We become aware that we are part of a Divine Presence all around us *and in us* that is constantly and miraculously unfolding."⁷⁵ Riso presented a pantheistic picture of man being one with the omnipresent God, and he promoted the Enneagram types as the appropriate paths to reaching that God.

Richard Rohr's loose references to God demonstrated his failure to give Him, namely the Person of the Holy Spirit, pride of place in the process of true biblical heart change. Instead, Rohr venerated the man-made Enneagram symbol and process. He failed to acknowledge the holiness of the triune God of the Bible, instead relegating the force or energy of personal change to an "inner observer."⁷⁶ In *Discovering*, Rohr stated: "A biblical definition of the Holy Spirit is "*dynamis*," which means "power" or "strength."⁷⁷

But the Person and work of the Holy Spirit cannot be demoted to being Rohr's "fair witness" that helps man to let go of his negative inner voices on his way back to remembering his good "True Self."⁷⁸ Nor will the Helper, Riso's theology notwithstanding, be seconded to

⁷¹ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 18; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 29.

⁷² Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 27.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 20.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁸ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 20; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 28-29. See also Heuertz, 27, 248.

the role of man's spiritual guide as man remembers his individual spark of the Divine and wakes up to his good, true nature.⁷⁹ Both Rohr and Riso advocated a tool and process of temporal behavior change instead of the one eternal heart change found in Scripture.

The correct biblical picture is one of a Holy God redeeming worshippers by replacing their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh, installing His Spirit and writing His law onto their new hearts, and causing them to walk in obedience to His Word, all for the glory of his name (Eze 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Jer 31:33). Jay Adams, David Powlison, and Heath Lambert agreed and confirmed that effective, lasting heart change is a process that is enabled by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ The God of the Bible is good and holy, and He exists in a triune nature—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that is the most perfect, loving, conflict-free of *all* relationships. Christ is the perfect image of what God is conforming man to be, by the power and direction of His Spirit (Rom 8:28-29; 12:1-2; Col 3:7-8). Adams confirmed not only the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but also the role of each Person of the Godhead in man's salvation including the cooperative process of sanctification.⁸¹ Adams stated that, "Father, Son, and Spirit, then, all participate in man's salvation. Salvation was designed by the Father, effectuated by the Son and applied by the Spirit. Salvation is a trinitarian work."⁸²

Systematic theologians John Frame, Stanley Grenz, and Herman Bavinck have each maintained the full deity of the Holy Spirit as a core evangelical doctrine.⁸³ Frame appealed to Scripture's reference to the Spirit as "God" in Acts 5:3-4 when Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit as well as in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 when Paul wrote "that believers are the temple of God because the Spirit of God dwells in us."⁸⁴ Grenz confirmed that in the gospel of John 14:16-17 the promised figure was "another Counselor" (Greek: *allon parakleton*) that "implies a similarity between the Coming One and the Lord himself" to assist the apostles in their

⁷⁹ Riso and Hudson, 27.

⁸⁰ Jay Adams, *Theology for Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 233-248; Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 158-179; David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 26-29.

⁸¹ Adams, *Theology*, 176-177.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸³ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 471-473; 477-479; Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 70-78; 85-88; 469; 486-488; Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God: Instruction in the Christian Religion According to the Reformed Confession* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2020), 137; 139; 367.

⁸⁴ Frame, 472.

mission (see also Acts 1:8).⁸⁵ Bavinck confirmed the deity of the Spirit and stated that "the Holy Spirit is, together with the Son and the Father, the one, true God, and is to be eternally lauded and praised as such."⁸⁶

Rohr and Riso's Doctrine of Man

Richard Rohr maintained a dualistic nature of man but emphasized the spiritual aspect of man in support of the Enneagram's basic premise that change takes place in the person's soul. Enneagram author Christopher Heuertz, heavily influenced by Rohr, defined the objective of using the Enneagram as finding your "True Self," a term popularized by theologian Thomas Merton in the 1960s and used throughout Heuertz's first Enneagram book *The Sacred Enneagram*.⁸⁷ In *Sacred*, Heuertz defined "True Self" in his glossary as "The integrated authentic self. Who each person is created and called to be when the heart is centered and the mind is at peace. One's essence of Essential Self."⁸⁸

Don Riso held to a "sacred psychology" that endorsed the combined use of both psychology and spirituality, in the form of the Enneagram personality test, that shows man not so much who he is, but rather how he has limited himself from remembering who he is.⁸⁹ Riso developed the trademarked term for the Enneagram as "the bridge between psychology and spirituality[™]" and maintained that the Enneagram helps man remove the hindrances associated with his personality en route to remembering and rediscovering his true nature, or "Divine Essence."⁹⁰ Riso agreed with Rohr's view, as well as views "commonly accepted by psychologists," that man's personality is deterministic in nature.⁹¹ And Riso claimed that all people, being a product of childhood experiences and genetic factors, emerge from

85 Grenz, 477-478.

86 Bavinck, 139.

87 Thomas Merton, *The New Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1961), 117-118; Heuertz, 25; 27; 31-32; 39.

88 Heuertz, 248.

89 Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 27-30.

90 Ibid.

91 Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 15; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 26; Riso, 27. But Riso provides no citation of sources for the "commonly accepted" views that he references.

childhood as one of nine basic personality types.⁹² Riso affirmed a deterministic view of man and stated that “people do not change from one basic personality type to another.”⁹³

The Bible teaches that man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) to live in worshipful obedience to His Word as he exercised the stewarded dominion that God had given to him (Gen 1:28-30; 2:15). But man rebelled against his Holy Creator (Gen 3:1-8), and the resulting consequences were devastating. Most notably, man’s ability to fully image God became tainted and broken (Gen 3:8-24). But in the midst of man’s despair, God provided man the hope of reconciliation to Himself. Heath Lambert proposed that the facilitation of this promised restoration of man to God is the very goal of biblical counseling.⁹⁴ And Jay Adams contended that God’s saving grace is intended to lift man beyond his original state.⁹⁵ In the midst of his exhortation to readers for the development of a “serious attempt to systematize biblical data on personality,” Adams made two simple, yet profound statements that refute both Rohr’s and Riso’s deterministic views on personality types. First, Adams confirmed that “The Bible everywhere looks on personality as *fluid*. No one is “stuck” at any point in his life with a certain personality.”⁹⁶ Corollary to his first point, Adams confirmed that “counselors very definitely can help counselees to effect personality change” and cited the Ephesians model of progressive sanctification as the means to do so (Eph 4:17-5:5).⁹⁷ David Powlison agreed with Adams and Lambert that man *can* change and man *must* change.⁹⁸ According to Powlison, the final one of his five factors of sanctification is simply that “you change,” and he cited a scriptural and purposeful type of change that results in serving God, and *not* serving self: “You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess 1:9).⁹⁹ It is God’s design for man to turn from sin in repentance to a holy God.

⁹² Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 15; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 26; Riso, 27.

⁹³ Riso, *Personality*, 27-28.

⁹⁴ Lambert, 190.

⁹⁵ Adams, 175.

⁹⁶ Adams, 251.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?*, 61-69.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

Rohr and Riso's Enneagram Doctrine of Sin

Richard Rohr used the term sin throughout his writings and teachings. His version of sin connected every man to a single God-given “gift” that was labeled on one of nine points on the Enneagram. Rohr maintained that each man’s gift is often sinfully abused when taken to extremes, and he labeled such extremes as obsessions.¹⁰⁰ Betraying a Jungian influence, he claimed that “the Enneagram shows us, among other things, the *dark side* of our gifts,” and affirmed that “Our gift and our sin are two sides of the same coin.”¹⁰¹ Rohr claimed that God, who has given each of us one of nine gifts illustrated on the Enneagram, makes use of our sins. He contended that accepting one’s gift from God is imperative to seeing one’s sin, and Rohr added that man must accept his big sin in order to realize how gifted he actually is.¹⁰² According to Rohr, that’s why it is so important for every person to determine which Enneagram number they are and then see and accept their one big sin.¹⁰³ The most practical components of Father Rohr’s analysis of each personality type are what he labeled “dilemma” and “conversion and redemption.”¹⁰⁴ He eventually defined sin as “a separation or failure to reach a goal.”¹⁰⁵ Suzanne Stabile, co-author of *The Road Back to You* with Ian Morgan Cron, was personally mentored and trained on the Enneagram by Rohr. She agreed with Rohr that one “deadly sin” exists for each personality type and concluded that one of the goals of the Enneagram is “Learning how to manage your deadly sin rather than allowing it to manage you.”¹⁰⁶ Rohr and Ebert characterized “original sin” as “We have abandoned our soul, our “soul child,” for a false identity that is defended and deceitful, and so we are trapped.”¹⁰⁷

In contrast to Rohr, Riso made a conscious decision to emphasize and develop the “healthy” traits of each psychological type in first book on the Enneagram, and this perhaps explains the absence of his formal treatment of sin. His later work with Hudson focused more on developing wisdom along a path to spiritual growth, therefore necessitating an

¹⁰⁰ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 14-22; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 24-32.

¹⁰¹ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 16; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 27.

¹⁰² Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 18; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 28.

¹⁰³ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 21; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 183; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 201.

¹⁰⁶ Cron and Stabile, 30-31.

¹⁰⁷ Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 45.

acknowledgment of the existence of sin to some degree. Riso and Hudson's treatment of sin was an adoption of the prior work of Ichazo and Naranjo, maintaining that the nine deadly sins, also called "passions," were human distortions of corresponding divine attributes. Consistent with their process of identifying and addressing healthy and unhealthy directions in humans, they clarified their concept of sin as follows: "The idea of the Deadly Sins (also called the 'Passions') is best understood if we think of the word sin not as something bad or evil, but as the tendency to 'miss the mark' in some way."¹⁰⁸ Both Rohr and Riso eventually accepted and adopted Ichazo's and Naranjo's secularized concept and associated labels for sin.¹⁰⁹

But contrary to Rohr, Riso, and the Enneagram authors that they have influenced, evangelical systematic theologians and biblical counseling authors in no way affirmed, intimated, or associated any positive characteristic with sin. Theologian Millard Erickson claimed that the doctrine of sin is important because it affects all other biblical doctrines, and therefore cannot be sidestepped.¹¹⁰ Wayne Grudem characterized man's ongoing sinful dilemma when he described the sanctification process as "a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more *free from sin* and like Christ in our actual lives."¹¹¹ Grudem provided a picture of man's need to break from the ruling power of sin not only at the point of regeneration, but also throughout the ongoing sanctification process. Consistent with Erickson and Grudem, Owen Strachan maintained that God's standard for man is perfection. He juxtaposed man's sinfulness with God's holiness and confirmed that "God does not judge us according to our behavior. He judges us according to his standard. His standard is perfect. It is absolute holiness at all times and in all situations."¹¹² While Strachan did acknowledge sin as both nature and acts, his emphasis on nature is hard to miss. Man's depravity stands in clear opposition to God's holiness.

Both Jay Adams and Heath Lambert leaned heavily on the doctrine of fallen man in need of redemption as a basis for all biblical counseling.¹¹³ Adams connected the doctrine of sin tightly with the very nature of man. He designated one of four parts of his own Doctrine

¹⁰⁸ Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 22-24.

¹⁰⁹ Riso and Hudson, *Wisdom*, 23; Rohr and Ebert, *Discovering*, 183.

¹¹⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 513-515.

¹¹¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 746-748.

¹¹² Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2019), 90.

¹¹³ Adams, 94-159; Lambert, 214-246

of Man as “Counseling and Human Sin.”¹¹⁴ Adams referred to sin as “any failure to do what God requires or any transgression of what He forbids. It is doing what God says don’t do or not doing what He says to do. Sin, therefore, is “lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Sin is disobedience to God.”¹¹⁵ In confirming both the reality of sin and man’s subsequent fallen nature, John Frame added that “Of course, following the fall, none of us is good as we will see (Isa 64:6; Rom 3:23). We can become good only by union with Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.”¹¹⁶ Frame pressed the point that sin is specific disobedience to the commands of God’s Word, and wrote

The normative definition of sin (“sin is lawlessness,” 1 John 3:4) is often prominent in Scripture, especially since the first sin was disobedience to a specific divine command. That needs to be emphasized today especially, when even the church seems to have distaste for keeping authoritative commands. All of Scripture calls for us to obey God. Indeed, all of Scripture functions as command, because it is the Word of God.¹¹⁷

These theologians affirmed that Scripture attests to the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, and the means by which man can be reconciled to his Creator. But Scripture also establishes and maintains the standard by which all men will be judged.

Rohr and Riso’s Doctrine of Scripture

In his section “Jesus and the Enneagram” of *Discovering the Enneagram*, Richard Rohr tried to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is connected to each of the nine Enneagram types. As he walked through each of the nine types, Rohr utilized Scripture passages to proof text behavioral extremes that each personality type has adopted. For example, in his discussion of the negative traits of “Ones,” the “Reformers” (see Appendix A, columns 1 and 2) who are in constant pursuit of perfection in themselves and others, Rohr made reference to Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount, in the context of perfection. He then paraphrased Robert Short, *The Gospel According to Peanuts*, saying that a “key paradox of the Gospels is that we become perfect by accepting our own imperfection. We must recognize that [our

¹¹⁴ Adams, 139-159.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 146-147.

¹¹⁶ Frame, 845, footnote 1.

¹¹⁷ Frame, 849-850.

imperfection] is a part of the process of growth, that we make many mistakes.”¹¹⁸ Rohr misplaced an emphasis on human perfection in the midst of the passage’s larger theme of repentance and forgiveness. In a similar evaluation of “Sixes,” the “Loyalists” who have the need for security or certainty, Rohr used Luke 4:16 as a reference to Jesus’ “inner authority” that freed Him to “obey laws, rules, and traditions, as long as they weren’t taken to be the “real thing.”¹¹⁹ Using the story of Jesus’ return to the Nazareth synagogue, and subsequent reading of the Isaiah scroll, Rohr was proof texting Jesus’ own willingness to keep rules in his humanity—a behavior familiar to “Sixes.” This provides another example, of many throughout his works, where Rohr missed the bigger point—in this case Jesus’ confirmation of Himself as the Messiah prophesied in Isaiah.¹²⁰

After first writing *Personality Types*, Don Riso later co-authored *The Wisdom of the Enneagram* with Russ Hudson. But there was no reference or underpinning to Scripture in either work. In fact, Riso elevated the Enneagram symbol and typological system as an ancient, time-proven source of wisdom in itself, perpetuating the myth of its mystical origins and helping to maintain its venerated and authoritative position.

But Holy Scripture demands its rightful place of authority as the Creator’s Word, and it must be held high above the human wisdom of created man. Absolute truth, if it indeed exists, must come from an authoritative source. The Creator God spoke all things from nothing into creation (Gen 1:1-31), and He has spoken to His creation through His Word. Lambert clearly explained that the characteristic of scriptural authority “means that the Bible is our supreme standard for what we should believe and how we should behave because it comes from God, who cannot lie.”¹²¹ David Powlison and Jay Adams both confirmed the undeniable and necessary link between the Holy Spirit and His Word as being foundational to the process of progressive sanctification in a Christian’s life.¹²² Adams summarized the hope of God-honoring change available to Christians through counseling that relies on the work of the Holy Spirit in step with His Word:

¹¹⁸ Rohr, *Discovering*, 214; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 234. Rohr cited Robert L. Short, *The Gospel According to Peanuts* (New York, 1958), 15-16.

¹¹⁹ Rohr, *Discovering*, 220; Rohr and Ebert, *Christian*, 240.

¹²⁰ See Luke 4:18-28 and Isaiah 61:1-2 for the complete story and prophecy.

¹²¹ Lambert, 36.

¹²² Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?*, 48-49; Adams, *Theology*, 177.

When doing true counseling—i.e., working with saved persons to enable them to make changes, at a level of depth that pleases God—it is possible to solve any true counseling problem (i.e., any problem involving love for God and one’s neighbor). Such assurance stems from the fact that all the resources necessary for change are available in the Word and by the Spirit.¹²³

In John MacArthur’s *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, David Powlison recounted and affirmed seven core elements of biblical counseling that Jay Adams had “rediscovered, articulated, and defended” since the 1970s.¹²⁴ Powlison stated that “The biblical change process which counseling must aim at is progressive sanctification” and then confirmed that “Counseling is the private ministry of the Word of God.”¹²⁵ A focus on Scripture is required in order for biblical heart change to occur. Biblical counseling takes place through the ministry of the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit of God.¹²⁶

Systematic theologians Erickson and Grudem concurred on the importance of recognizing the Bible as the authority that it claims to be, and they also warned that man’s disbelief in God’s Word is an indictment of disobedience to God himself.¹²⁷ Stanley Grenz confirmed the connection between the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word. Grenz stated, that “Because the Bible is the Spirit’s book, its purpose is instrumental to his mission. For this reason, we construct our doctrine of the Bible within the context of pneumatology, treating the Spirit’s activity in Scripture as one dimension of his overall mission.”¹²⁸ John Frame connected the work of the Holy Spirit—God Himself—with the sufficiency of Scripture. Frame wrote, that “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contains all the divine words that we will ever need for any area of life. Sufficiency in this sense, however, does not deny that the work of the Spirit is also necessary.”¹²⁹ Biblical heart change is both linked to and directly dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God ministering the Word of God.

¹²³ Adams, *Theology*, 177.

¹²⁴ David Powlison, “Biblical Counseling in Recent Times, in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 27-29

¹²⁵ Ibid., 28.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 27-29.

¹²⁷ Grudem, 81; Erickson, 212-215.

¹²⁸ Grenz, 495.

¹²⁹ Frame, 679.

Conclusion

It is unlikely that philosopher and theologian Francis Schaeffer ever met Oscar Ichazo or Claudio Naranjo. It is doubtful that Schaeffer ever read their work on Ennea-types. But back in 1968, Schaeffer characterized the essence of the Enneagram personality typology that has now become popular in many churches.¹³⁰ Schaeffer's quoted characterization fits amazingly well with the theology embedded in the Enneagram symbol and typology: "To the new theology, the usefulness of a symbol is in direct proportion to its obscurity. There is connotation, as in the word god, but there is no definition. The secret of the strength of neo-orthodoxy is that these religious symbols with a connotation of personality give an illusion of meaning."¹³¹ Much of what readers encounter in Enneagram authors Richard Rohr and Don Riso are misused, misquoted, or co-opted words that would be labeled by Francis Schaeffer as a characteristic component of the "new theology" that he called "semantic mysticism."¹³²

A mysterious teacher of esoteric subjects named G.I. Gurdjieff brought the Enneagram symbol to the western world in the early 1900s, and seven decades later a Gestalt psychiatrist named Claudio Naranjo mapped nine personality types to the nine points on the Enneagram symbol. Soon after, American Jesuits, including Richard Rohr and Don Riso, adopted the combination of the symbol and personality types, and the Enneagram was effectively endorsed as an esoteric tool for spiritual development.¹³³ In spite of being largely discredited by both the academics and practitioners of secular psychology and psychiatry, the Enneagram has gained popularity in evangelical churches, perhaps due to the recent historical success of attaching a type of spirituality to it. But the spirituality assigned to the Enneagram is not based on a biblical view of God, man, sin, and Scripture itself. And therein lies the Enneagram's most significant danger.

Based on a biblical critique of the influential works of Rohr and Riso, along with the Enneagram authors that they have influenced, the Enneagram personality typology should be rejected by evangelical churches. An evaluation of the early writings of Rohr and Riso exposed their misuse of Scripture to cloak their ideas in spiritual language. A biblical critique

¹³⁰ Merritt, "What is the 'Enneagram,' and why are Christians suddenly so Enamored by it?" <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>, Sept. 5, 2017 (Accessed September 18, 2018).

¹³¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 60.

¹³² Ibid., 60-70.

¹³³ Merritt, "What is the 'Enneagram,' and why are Christians suddenly so Enamored by it?" <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>, Sept. 5, 2017 (Accessed September 18, 2018).

also revealed their functional relegation of the Holy Spirit's role as the "inner observer" that wakes man up to his own inherent goodness. Scripture instead has confirmed the full deity and Personhood of the Holy Spirit. Rohr and Riso saw man as basically good and maintained that man need only to acknowledge his predominant passions or "sins" on his way to remembering his True Self. But Scripture bears witness to the holiness of God and to the sinfulness of man. Rohr, Riso, and the Enneagram authors that they influenced elevated the man-made Enneagram symbol and process to be an authority unto itself. This perspective of authority conflicts with what the Savior Himself confirmed in John 17:17: That progressive sanctification – the biblical form of human change – takes place by the application of the truth of God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.