PSYCHOLOGY

A BOOK REVIEW

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE OF

PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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***Stephen P. Greggo & Timothy Sisemore (Eds.). Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2012. 256 pp. ISBN 978-0-8308-3978-0***

***Authors***

Stephen G. Greggo and Timothy A. Sisemore have both edited the book, ‘Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches.’ Stephen P. Greggo is actively involved in teaching. He is a professor of counseling, training mental health counselors and clergy. Greggo is a psychologist and has maintained a close association with the Christian Counselling Associates in New York. Timothy A. Sisemore is serving as Director and a research professor of Psychology and Counselling at Richmont Graduate University Chattanooga. He also works as a counselor at Richmont Counselling center. Both authors have actively contributed to Christianity by creating an association between psychology and religion. They have both contributed to the subject by writing a number of books.

***Synopsis***

The book Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches builds an extensive understanding of the application of psychological counseling theories to the physical aspects of Christianity by conceptualizing one case in all five methods. The book begins by illustrating the challenges that Christian counselors may face (Stephen P. Greggo 2012) [[1]](#footnote-1). The editors emphasize the vision, temptations, motivations and personal passions of the Christian counselors should enhance and reflect the Spirit of Christian principles. The case revolves around a hypothetical client who has complex issues. The scholars associated with each approach interpret and resolve his issues through their theories by assessing, counseling and suggesting remedies for it. The five schools of thought the book revolve around counseling which adheres to the Christian ideologies. The authors work comprehensively to distinguish and explain these five models. The book takes inspiration from Psychology and Christianity: Five Views by Johnson. They include the levels of transformation, integration, and Christian psychology, transformational and **b**iblical counseling approach. The book reflects upon the teaching of God and how they can provide a better understanding of spiritual levels in an individual (Stephen P. Greggo 2012) [[2]](#footnote-2). Hence any human psychological issues can be better understood with the aid of the Gospel. The integration approach holds that the word of God is the ultimate truth. Therefore the teachings of God shall remain fundamental in the beliefs and the practices of the individuals (Stephen P. Greggo 2012)

 [[3]](#footnote-3). Science shall be central to the counseling integrating and balancing the theology, psychology and spiritual concerns. The Christian psychology approach refers to the guidelines and the practices of the therapist and the one receiving counseling to be aligned with the word of God (Stephen P. Greggo 2012)[[4]](#footnote-4). It shall be vividly operational in both the therapist and the individual receiving it. The transformational approach defines a narrative for the therapist who has been transformed through spiritual guidance to deliver counseling by encouraging the spirituality and association with Bible and the principles laid by God effectively (Stephen P. Greggo 2012)[[5]](#footnote-5). All of this to motivate and enhance the Christian faith in the believers. And lastly, the Biblical counseling approach which states that the Faith is psychology itself and the Christian Ministry is the therapy. The primary aim of this therapy is to secure Christian wisdom through the cure of souls of individuals (Stephen P. Greggo 2012)[[6]](#footnote-6). The author highlights that other therapies are secular in nature and do not completely heal the psychological needs of the people.

***Critical Evaluation***

The book ‘Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches’ is a comprehensive effort by the editors towards creating a multi-disciplinary approach that leads to a better understanding of psychology and the Christian Faith (McMinn 2010)[[7]](#footnote-7). The book provides a better understanding of the psychological application through counseling as compared to the literature available before it (Johnson 2010)[[8]](#footnote-8). The book is well edited and hence is an unbiased and fair assessment of a wide range of perspectives available. It strengthens the association between the theory i.e. Christianity and practices i.e. counseling. The book is unique for its application of theology to aid individuals in distress. The practicality of the content can be viewed in its constant application of the counseling models to a hypothetical case that can be easily related to the lives of many individuals. The case signifies the complications and issues that can be addressed through the Word of God with the help of these five approaches. The book serves as a guideline for the Christian who is in service or aspire to be counselors to incorporate and instill the spirit of God in their services. Another significant feature of this resource is that it does not ignore the contemporary aspects of the modern world. The book is widely applauded for recognizing and incorporating other disciplines; it identifies the science on equal levels without distinctions.

Although it is applauded for its outstanding approach to integrating science with religion. The book has also attracted many critics for its content. Critics argue that although all five approaches mentioned are comprehensively discussed however, they are more suggestive than the actual representation given by the original authors of these five models. Moreover, in many ways, individuals regard scientific understanding above the religious when it comes to counseling (Pickering 2019)[[9]](#footnote-9). Therefore incorporating religious beliefs has a low receptivity amongst individuals seeking counseling or therapy (Naum Ilievski 2019)[[10]](#footnote-10). In addition to this the empirical research on the results of therapy by incorporating Christian principles also conclude a deficit of trust by individuals in these approaches (Larzelere 1980 )[[11]](#footnote-11). The relativism one case cannot be applied to all, one person’s truth cannot be another person’s reality. Critics argue that there is a wide range of issues that Jake’s case may not be applied. Lastly, critic's state there remains a wide gap between the Christians and secular mediums of counseling that include medicine and other treatments. The book does not address how the non-Christians could take help from it. Hence the approaches laid in the book are not universal.

# ***References***

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